



Choctaw County Economic Development Foundation

Foundation Matters

FOUNDATION MATTERS

JULY 2007

DID YOU KNOW?

The Red Hills Mine:

- has moved over 200,000,000 cubic yards of dirt to date or the equivalent amount of an 80 ft deep hole spanning the city limits of Ackerman
- moves over 111,000 cubic yards of dirt per day
- has mined over 20,000,000 tons of lignite
- utilizes trucks capable of hauling 200 tons of material
- large dragline weighs over 8,000,000 lbs and moves at speeds of 0.1 ft per second. This machine is electric powered and the electricity bill is \$122,000 a month

Silverado Green Fuel Breaks Ground in EcoPlex

On April 9th Choctaw County celebrated a groundbreaking for the first tenant of the Red Hills EcoPlex, Silverado Green Fuel, Inc. Dignitaries present for the event included Governor Haley Barbour, Congressman Roger Wicker, Silverado CEO Garry Anselmo, MDA Director Gray Swoope as well as local elected officials and leaders.

Silverado will invest \$26 million the first three years to construct and operate a facility to produce a Low Rank Coal Water Fuel from lignite mined by North American Coal. Located on 14 acres in the EcoPlex, the facility will be designed to utilize the county's vast supply of lignite reserves by converting them into green fuel, a new form of environmentally friendly, low-cost alternative fuel. The facility will create local jobs, a sizable investment in the local economy, and highlight Choctaw County as a national

leader in alternative energy clean-coal technologies.

Hayes Dent, Richard Davis, Supervisor Archie Collins, and 4-County EPA are among those instrumental in making the groundbreaking a success. After the ceremony, North American Coal hosted the crowd for a barbecue lunch provided by Silverado.



Bill Canty, Don Threadgill, Thomas Higgins, Gray Swoope, Congressman Roger Wicker, Gary Anselmo, Governor Haley Barbour, and Doug Sullivan

Dawg Days of Summer August 10th & 11th

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The annual Dawg Days of Summer festival will be held on Friday and Saturday, August 10th – 11th in downtown Ackerman. The festival will include traditional favorites such as bingo and the pet show, intermingled with new activities such as the homemade ice cream contest. The most noticeable change will be the layout of the festival itself. The bulk of the activities will be located on and around Main Street and the large parking area between the railroad tracks and the downtown merchants, while the antique car show will be around the courthouse area. Large tents will be set up to provide shade and a convenient respite to enjoy the tasty concessions.

Activities on Friday night will include a Sunset Gospel Jubilee followed by the street concert featuring the Shane O'Dazier Band. The ever popular bingo sponsored by the Twentieth Club will once again be held in Pap's Place. This

year commercial vendors are encouraged to set up on Friday to accommodate the large crowds expected.

The Pet Show will kick off activities Saturday morning. A full array of food and arts & crafts vendors will be set up around Main Street. A stage will be set up in front of Town Hall for political speeches by candidates for election on the Choctaw County ballot, and entertainment provided by local talents. The homemade ice cream contest will once again feature a People's Choice selection by patrons who can taste samples from each contestant and vote for their favorite. Inflatables will be set up for youngsters and the Choctaw Cruisers will sponsor the Antique Car Show for the classic car enthusiasts.

Rotary Club Established in Ackerman

The Louisville Rotary Club is sponsoring the establishment of a Rotary Club in Ackerman. There was an active Rotary Club in Ackerman for about many years, but the club eventually dissolved as membership waned and due to the loss at that time of a permanent place to meet for lunch.

Rotary club members are business and professional leaders who volunteer in their communities and promote world understanding and peace. One of the founding principles of Rotary was to meet periodically to enjoy camaraderie and enlarge one's circle of business and professional acquaintances.

Presently a group of community minded leaders are meeting each Thursday at 12:00 until 1:00 at Pap's Place as a provisional club. Rotary requires 20 members to have an officially recognized club. The group is meeting for lunch and fellowship, followed by a presentation by a guest on a topic of local interest. The group will continue to meet as a provisional club until such time as it reaches the level of 20 members. Much credit belongs to Hugh Weaver of Ackerman and Steve Anderson of the Louisville Rotary Club for their efforts in organizing a club in Ackerman.

Large Crowd Attends Annual Banquet

The Foundation held its annual banquet on April 17th at the Community Center with a large crowd of about 200 in attendance. The program opened with the National Anthem sung by 2007 Choctaw County Junior Miss, Lauren McDaniel, and the Invocation was given by Sr. Alies Therese. Entertainment was provided by Mark Wood on the piano followed by bluegrass by the Bywy Bottom Boys while the audience enjoyed the meal catered by Lake Tiak O'Khata.



Nick Walters

Following the meal the program continued with the Choctaw County Supervisors unveiling a plaque dedicating the Multi

Purpose Building in honor of the late Robert Kay Bowie. Hayes Dent followed with an update on the Silverado Green Fuel Project, and Bubba Hudspeth made a presentation on Ackerman Forge, informing the audience that the business already employs about 60 people. The keynote speaker was Nick Walters, former USDA State Director, who spoke of the potential opportunity that exists for growth in Choctaw County, and explained that successful communities are those that make a diligent effort to make things happen.

**CCEDF
Banquet 2007**



LINK CEO Joe Higgins Slated for Special Presentation in August

The Choctaw County Economic Development Foundation will host a special presentation by Joe Max Higgins, Jr. of the Columbus-Lowndes LINK organization on August 14th at 6:00 p.m. at the Community Center. Under the leadership of Higgins, the LINK has experienced much success with their economic development program, highlighted by the SeverCorr project.

Higgins' presentation will focus on keys to economic success for a community. Communities will vary in their level of achievement of these keys, but a significant level of accomplishment is usually required for a sustained, successful economic

development program. While local elected officials and community leaders are encouraged to attend, the presentation is open to all local citizens.

Prior to the presentation, food plates will be provided for the audience through the sponsorship of 4-County Electric Power Association, the Foundation, and local volunteers.



Bates Serving on CEDS Committee

The Golden Triangle Planning and Development District (GTPDD) is working with the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration on the development of a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the seven county area covered by the GTPDD. Foundation Director Alan Bates serves on the CEDS committee.

CEDS is a local planning and implementation process designed to create jobs, foster a more stable and diversified economy,

improve living conditions, and provide a mechanism for guiding and coordinating the efforts of persons and organizations concerned with economic development. The document describes the problems, needs, and resources of the GTPDD area, identifies the goals and objectives of the development strategy, presents the strategies and action plans devised to achieve those goals, and outlines standards for evaluation of the program's achievements.

Group Visits Washington Seeking Support for Economic Development

On January 31st, Foundation Executive Director Alan Bates visited Washington, DC along with Archie Collins, Chris McIntire, and Marty Crowder to meet with the Mississippi Congressional delegation. The purpose of the trip was to brief the members of the delegation of the progress of projects such as Silverado and seek support for other projects including the lake, four-laning of Mississippi Highway 15, and the continued growth of the power plant and mining projects.

The morning of January 31st the group met with staff members of Senators Cochran and Lott. Senators Lott and Cochran were involved with Senate business and unable to attend the briefings themselves. During the afternoon the group met with Congressman Roger Wicker, Congressman Chip Pickering and members of their staffs. Both Congressmen were gracious to visit personally with the group between voting deadlines.



Pictured left to right - Supervisor Chris McIntire, U. S. Senator Trent Lott, Supervisor Archie Collins and CCEDF Director Alan Bates

Later that evening Choctaw County jointly hosted a reception with Winston County in appreciation of the support of the delegation. The reception was well attended by staff members of each delegation and Senators Cochran and Lott spent several minutes at the reception as well. The reception provided an excellent opportunity to network with the delegation, develop good working relationships and raise awareness of issues directly affecting Choctaw County. The reception was possible through sponsorships of companies and organizations supporting Choctaw and Winston Counties.

Sponsors supporting Choctaw County were North American Coal, Crowder Engineering, and Pickering Engineering. Also attending some of the meetings and/or the reception were Tom Bryant and Carl Ray Furr or Pickering Engineering, Jeff Ballweber of Mississippi State University, and Joy Foy of Mississippi Development Authority.

Foundation to Participate in Labor Force Study for Choctaw County

The Tennessee Valley Authority, North Mississippi Industrial Development Association, Appalachian Regional Commission, CREATE Foundation and several economic development organizations including the CCEDF are participating in a 36 county regional labor force study. Alan Bates served on the steering committee which formulated the Request for Proposals and selected The Pathfinders as the consultant to conduct the study.

This study will examine under-employed workers; employment in declining industries such as the furniture industry and the transferability of those skills elsewhere; availability of employees who have the capacity to perform auto sector related skills; and

skills of those graduating from area universities, community colleges, and spouses not currently in the work force. The study will also identify specific skill gaps, information detailing commuting patterns of the regional workforce, and best practices for recruitment, retention and training of the regional labor force.

According to Area Development magazine, labor costs and the availability of skilled labor are the two of the top three most important factors in site selection, following highway accessibility. Therefore, a thorough knowledge of the labor force is a necessary tool in economic development, and can also be used by the community to identify and correct deficiencies in producing a well-educated and skilled labor force.

Red Hills EcoPlex Ready for Business

The Red Hills EcoPlex is ready for occupancy. The recent groundbreaking for Silverado Green Fuel, Inc. will provide the 137 acre ecological industrial park with its first tenant. Silverado will lease approximately 14 acres near the entrance to the Ecoplex.



Entrance to Red Hills EcoPlex after landscaping was completed.

The Red Hills Ecoplex is designed to host a network of environmentally friendly industries around the anchor tenants, the Red Hills Power Plant and the Red Hills Mine, to maximize community benefits. Companies that locate in the Red Hills Ecoplex might participate in exchange of by-products, whereby one company's by-product becomes another company's source of energy or another product. By working together, the community of businesses sees a collective benefit that is greater than the sum of individual benefits each company would realize by only optimizing its individual performance.

- The primary components of the infrastructure installed in the Ecoplex include:
- ◆ 3,200 linear feet of roadway
 - ◆ 6,150 linear feet of water main
 - ◆ 2,400 linear feet of sewer lines, a pump station and force main
 - ◆ 2 cleared sites of about 2.5 acres each

The Red Hills Ecoplex is situated adjacent to the power plant and mine to maximize the efficiency of transferring energy and materials between the facilities. The Ecoplex is located about six miles north of Ackerman, west of Mississippi Highway 9, and about thirteen miles south of Highway 82, which provides direct four-lane access to Interstate 55.

Walking Track in Downtown Ackerman



Ackerman's new walking track is nearing completion. Construction of the 1700 foot (1/3 mile) track began in early spring and is

set to be completed this fall with landscaping the area surrounding the track. The Town of Ackerman received a grant from the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks to cover the largest portion of the cost. With the aid of the grant the town was only responsible for a small portion of the cost.

"It's an addition that has been well accepted...you can see people out there at all times during the day," stated Mayor Burney.

MSU Student has Internship in CCEDF Office

Beginning in June the CCEDF office staff was joined by Barbara Gable. Barbara is working through the summer on an internship arranged by Dr. Jon Rezek, a professor at MSU, and Alan Bates. She works 4 hours a week and also attends classes at MSU. Barbara is an Economics major and will graduate with honors in August 2007. Barbara and her husband, Terry, are stationed at Columbus, AFB. After graduation they will be relocating to Klamath Falls, Oregon where Barbara will begin an online MBA program and Terry will begin flying the F-15. While working in the CCEDF office she will be gathering site, building, and

demographic information for the Foundation's updated website.

The CCEDF would like to express our thanks to Barbara for a job well done and wish her and her husband the best of luck in the future.



Foundation Receives Grant from ARC

The Foundation recently was notified of the award of a grant of \$12,650 from the Appalachian Regional Commission for an analysis of the water systems serving Choctaw County. The Foundation is required to provide a match of \$3,163 through in-kind services, cash or other non-ARC sources of funds. The grant is made through the Flex-E-Grant program and will enable the community to meet one of the objectives in the recently completed ARC-sponsored Strategic Plan.

The funds will be used to conduct an analysis of the water systems serving Choctaw County to evaluate the systems for areas of potential improvement. The analysis will include rate studies, financial analyses and water loss

evaluations conducted by the Mississippi Rural Water Association, as well as an evaluation of capacity and condition of infrastructure by Crowder Engineering. The analysis may also consider other facets including long range planning of the water associations.

The study will take place over the next 6 months, and the project must be completed by June 30, 2008. The recommendations in the final report will be non-binding to the water systems, but will provide important information for the governing boards to consider. The Foundation thanks the participating water systems for agreeing to take part in this study.

Choctaw Gas Generation Begins Commercial Operation

Choctaw Gas Generation began commercial operation in January, 2007. The plant is a zero liquid discharge facility, where all process water remains on site or is evaporated. Choctaw Gas employs 11 people, and is a merchant plant which means that power sales are not guaranteed and market conditions dictate the sale of power.

Construction began in August, 2002 of the new 720-megawatt steam-electric power plant powered by dual natural gas-fired turbines. When operating at full capacity, this combined cycle plant can produce the power equivalent to supply 576,000 homes.

Choctaw Gas Generation, LLC is operated by Suez Energy Generation NA (SEGNA). SEGNA is the business unit of SUEZ Energy North America responsible for managing the company's power operations in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. SUEZ Energy Generation NA is headquartered in Houston, TX. They currently own and/or operate a total of 44 power, cogeneration, steam, and chilled-water

facilities, representing a capacity of more than 5,538 MW of electricity generation, 7.0 million pounds per hour of steam, and 65,000 tons of chilled water. The facilities use a variety of fuels to produce power, heat and cooling.

The Foundation salutes Production Manager Luke Goguts, Plant Manager Charles Davis, and the other employees of new Foundation member Choctaw Gas Generation for their role in this major investment in Choctaw County.



Foundation Welcomes New Directors

The Foundation has added five new Board members this year. The new members are: Tim Cutts, Sherry Woods, John Baswell, Terri Ming, and Betty Steiner. The Foundation Board is very pleased to have these new members serving as Foundation Directors. Tim Cutts and his wife own and operate Cutts Worldwide Logistics in Ackerman. Sherry Woods is an employee of 4-County EPA and works in the Ackerman office. John Baswell is District Ranger at Choctaw Lake Recreation Area. Terri Ming is employed by Choctaw Generation and is also the owner of LaDeDa in Ackerman. Betty Steiner is an insurance agent for State

Farm. She works in the State Farm office in Eupora. Tim Cutts, John Baswell, and Sherry Woods will also be serving on the Choctaw County Economic Development District's Board of Trustees.

Six board members have also left the Foundation this year. They are Everett Adams, Aubrey Ashford, Kenny Carmichael, Wesley Gammill, Ted Lewis, and Sade Turnipseed. The Foundation Board of Directors and the CCEDF office employees would like to thank these directors for their years of service and dedication to the economic and community development of Choctaw County.

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WE'RE ON THE WEB!

www.choctawcountymiss.com

The Choctaw County Economic Development Foundation is a non-profit organization with a mission to promote business and community development through coordinated effort of its membership.

The Foundation membership includes industry, small business, utility providers, local town governments, retail merchants, churches, and individuals.

The Foundation Board members are:

Ray Atkinson, John Baswell, Katherine Black, Lila Chandler, Charlotte Cornish, Tim Cutts, Gradie Ervin, Ken Henderson, Randy Loper, Terri Ming, Dannie Reed, Betty Steiner, John Tennant, Jody Webb, Sherry Woods, and Lewis Wright.



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