

MS DELTA COLLABORATION & PARTNERSHIP



Local Government Leadership Institute
Cleveland, MS

BACKGROUND

Mississippi's local governments and other stakeholders have indicated that they are plagued with issues and concerns regarding: aging, deteriorating and failing infrastructure systems; threats to drinking water quality; lack of the financial resources to upgrade their cities' systems; air pollution; regulations; and understanding environmental terminology.

The Office of Community Engagement (OCE), recognized that municipalities in Mississippi need assistance with keeping up with the constantly changing environmental regulations and their obligation to environmental compliance.

In response to the growing environmental issues threatening communities across the state, OCE developed a Municipal Needs Assessment to gauge the needs of the communities and the professional development needs of outreach and education materials.

Of those surveyed, 80% reported infrastructures are in poor conditions, 50% experience lift station failures and 25% experience sewer blockage and equipment failures with their wastewater system.

More than three fourths of the surveyed participants noted that they have poor knowledge in the areas of storm water, wastewater, solid waste management and air general permits. The results of the assessment indicated a need for training in understanding permits.

ENVIRONMENTAL PARTNERSHIPS



SUMMARY OF THE PARTNERSHIP (CONT).

In 2018 MDEQ opened an investigation into Davis Research Lab. The investigation revealed discrepancies, deficiencies, and/or irregularities with the collection, analysis, and/or reporting of samples by Davis Research. It appears these discrepancies, deficiencies, and/or irregularities may have led to erroneous data being submitted to municipalities and to MDEQ. This is important because MDEQ uses this data for the administration of environmental programs aimed at protecting human health and the environment. As a result of these findings, MDEQ issued an Administrative Order on September 27, 2018, requiring Davis Research to cease collecting, analyzing, and/or reporting samples for any person or facility in Mississippi where such samples are required by any permit, regulation, or law administered by MDEQ until such time as it complies with the conditions of the referenced order. In 2019, the Davis Lab was found guilty of all charges and sentenced by the Department of Justice.

Our initial concerns were that there are still some municipalities who:

- may be in need of information on available resources (financial, equipment, etc.) through MDEQ or other agencies or entities. We are able to provide that information as well
- have officials who do not know what their responsibilities are and the responsibility of wastewater staff
- have not signed up to file Discharge Monitoring Reports (DMRs) electronically through the NetDMR database
- have not submitted 1 or more years of DMRs
- have exceedances after switching to a new lab

Our goal was to attempt to educate and assist municipalities with getting back on track in hopes that non-compliant municipalities are able to return to compliance with environmental permits and municipalities in compliance remain as such. In addition, our goal is to make the municipal leaders comfortable with speaking with MDEQ representatives about environmental issues and seeking assistance when needed.

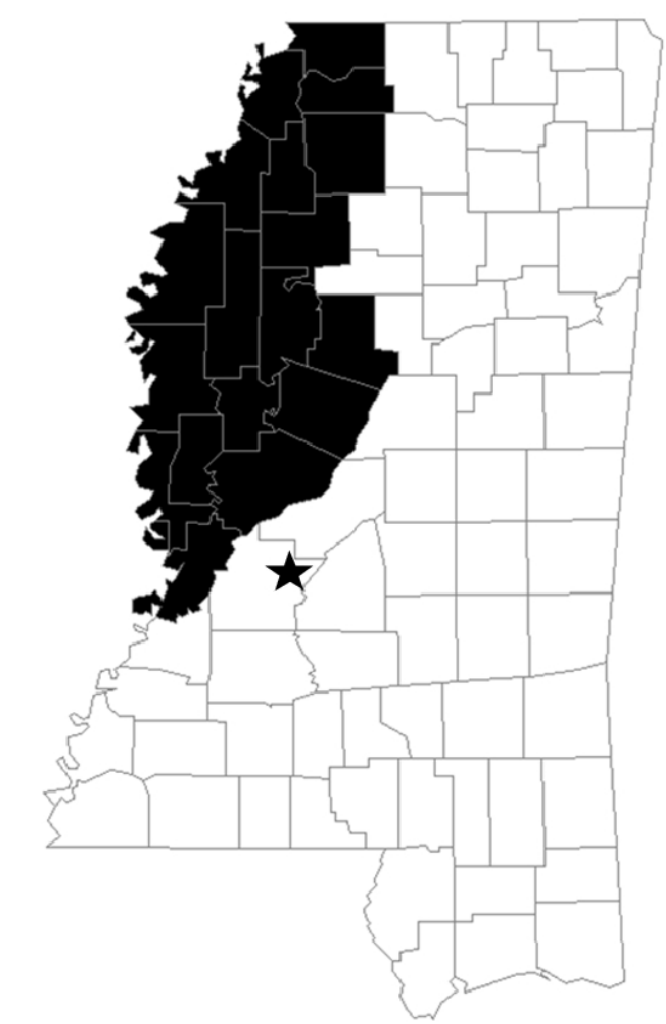
The OCE and the Local Government Leadership Institute (LGLI) joined forces to work together to meet the above goals, needs, and demands that municipalities are faced with.

The partnership was built on the fact that we both shared a common goal of assisting and supporting local officials of the Mississippi Delta in addressing governance challenges by providing activities, basic training, and helpful tools to run their municipalities effectively and efficiently.

Collaboration and strategic partnerships are vital in improving environmental outcomes.

ENGAGEMENT TIMELINE

| DATE | ACTIVITY |
|------------|---|
| 5/2020 | Partnership with LGLI |
| 06/11/2020 | Virtual Meeting Understanding the Basics in Environmental Permitting and Maintaining Environmental Compliance: A Friendly Conversation with the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality |
| 11/12/2020 | Virtual Meeting Addressing Environmental Justice through Land Use Planning |



★ State capital

QUICK FACTS

MDEQ'S OCE and Delta State University's Local Government Leadership Institute partnership offers workshops and trainings to assist officials with understanding and complying with current and proposed environmental rules and regulations, and to identify and utilize available resources.

Who We Serve

The Local Government Leadership Institute serves the eighteen counties of the Mississippi Delta Area. Those counties include: Bolivar, Carroll, Coahoma, Desoto, Holmes, Humphries, Issaquena, Leflore, Panola, Quitman, Sharkey, Sunflower, Tallahatchie, Tate, Tunica, Warren, Washington, and Yazoo.