

Coastal Research and Extension Center

dedicates new building complex

By Bob Ratliff



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in our relationship with the
people of South Mississippi,”*

MSU President Charles Lee

From its establishment in 1988 until last year, Mississippi State University’s Coastal Research and Extension Center was housed in rented office space in Biloxi. That changed in mid-2004 with the completion of the center’s new home on 30 acres adjacent to Biloxi High School.

The 24,000-square-foot facility was dedicated during Dec. 17 ceremonies. MSU officials, representatives of the Biloxi school systems, state and local government representatives, and others were on hand for the dedication.

“We are entering a new era in our relationship with the people of South Mississippi,” said MSU President Charles Lee. “This facility enables the center’s personnel to better carry out their missions of research, continuing education and service to the public.”

The three-building complex includes a distance learning center and conference rooms, biological and chemical laboratories and offices for MSU Extension Service personnel, Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station scientists and support staff.

Land for the center was provided by the Biloxi Public School District, which will benefit from the proximity of the facility to schools, said Larry Drawdy, Biloxi Public School District superintendent when the partnership between the school system and the center was established.

“The MSU research and extension center came to be located on property owned by the Biloxi school system because we saw a cooperative spirit of MSU personnel to work with K-12,” he said. “The Biloxi school system will benefit from the center’s distance learning and video conferencing capabilities, as well as from landscaping assistance and staff development opportunities.”

Other speakers during the dedication ceremony included Paul Tisdale, current Biloxi Public School District superintendent; Virginia Newton, member of the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning; and Vance Watson, MSU vice president for agriculture, forestry and veterinary medicine.

David Veal, head of the center, noted that personnel at the Biloxi facility and other facilities coordinated by the center conduct programs focused on food, fiber, plant systems and the environment.

The center coordinates activities at eight other facilities: Coastal Aquaculture Unit, Gulfport; Crosby Arboretum, Picayune; Experimental Seafood Processing Lab, Pascagoula; South Mississippi Branch Experiment Station, Poplarville; White Sand Research Unit, Pearl River County; McNeil Unit, McNeil; and Beaumont Horticulture Unit, Perry County.

The center’s programs are carried out in partnership with Alcorn State University and the Biloxi Public School District.



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Cutting the dedication ribbon for the Coastal Research and Extension Center were, from left, Ed Blakeslee, IHL Board; Larry Drawy, past superintendent of Biloxi Public School District; Charles Lee, MSU president; Virginia Newton, IHL Board; Paul Tisdale, superintendent of Biloxi Public School District; Scott Ross, IHL Board; and Vance Watson, MSU vice president for agriculture, forestry and veterinary medicine.



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Coastal Research and Extension Center business manager Diane Hughes visits with Biloxi residents Mr. and Mrs. Richard Ellzey during the new facility's open house.