



Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians Treatment Plant Dedication

October 11, 2006

Working Together to Achieve Wellness

by

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It is an honor to be here today. I really appreciate the opportunity to be a part of today's event to help dedicate this important facility to the service of the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians.

This dedication marks the culmination of a very successful and unique collaborative effort between the Indian Health Service (IHS), the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), State of Mississippi Rural Development Office. The Nashville Area entered into a first-ever Memorandum of Understanding with a USDA State Agency to accomplish the completion of this facility. I believe this agreement will provide a template for future collaborations with the USDA and possibly other state agencies in the Nashville Area.

There are several people I would like to acknowledge and thank for their contributions to this historic project. Most notably, Chief Philip Martin, who is legendary for his innovative and highly effective efforts to improve the health and welfare of the members of Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians.

I would also like to acknowledge the efforts of:

- LT Steve Sauer, P.E. – the IHS Project Engineer, who successfully managed this project from the Lafayette Field Office;
- CDR Scott M. Helgeson, P.E. – Director of Nashville Area Sanitation Facilities Construction Program;

The text is the basis of Dr. Grim's oral remarks at the dedication of the Choctaw Treatment Plant on October 11, 2006. It should be used with the understanding that some material may have been added or omitted during presentation.

- RADM (ret) Jim Meredith (former Nashville Area Director) - the Project Manager Consultant for the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians. I understand you spearheaded this collaborative effort and worked closely with all parties to resolve conflicting issues and keep the project moving forward;
- Mr. Carol Murphy, P.E. – the Director of Public Works for the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians;
- Mr. Butch Stokes – the Director of Utilities for the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians;
- Mr. Tim Murphy – the Principal Engineer in charge of overall design; and
- Mr. Jimmy Wallace – the Health Director for the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians for over 15 years.

You have all done a great job of negotiating, planning, designing, constructing, and whatever else was necessary to bring this project to completion, on time and within budget!

We at the Indian Health Service are very proud to be a partner with the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, and with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, in this venture. This was truly a joint effort. The USDA contributed funds to the IHS, our project engineer in the Lafayette Field Office exercised overall administrative control over the project, and the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians handled the entire design, construction, and procurement process for the facility. I find it especially impressive the way the Band was able to substantially reduce overall project costs through constructing a majority of the project with their own construction forces, and through negotiating and procuring the design, construction, and delivery of the treatment plant directly from the manufacturer, thereby avoided a prime contractor markup. The Band's efforts were a substantial part of being able to complete the project within the \$1,550,000 project budget.

This plant is an important part of our overall efforts in Indian County to promote disease prevention and wellness. Through our Health Promotion and Disease Prevention initiative, the IHS is preparing for the future of Indian health care. Working in concert, the IHS and Tribes are taking a number of actions aimed at health promotion and disease prevention.

We know that in order to effectively address chronic disease, we must address a wide spectrum of contributing factors, ranging from the quality of prenatal care to the availability of modern wastewater treatment facilities such as this one. It is important to have all federal, Tribal, Urban Indian, and state public health agencies and organizations, as well as other public and private organizations, working together to improve health and eliminate health disparities, and this project is certainly a shining example of such a partnership.

Achieving wellness takes considerable dedication and teamwork. The Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians wisely has taken the lead for its people by carefully planning this important new facility to help ensure the health and wellness of its members. I commend the Band, and all those involved in this project, for efficiently and effectively achieving their goals in completing this important facility.

Thank you.