

AT&T will provide records after a government subpoena

Associated Press

Major telecommunications conglomerate AT&T has agreed to provide the state of Mississippi records detailing how it used the almost \$284 million it was paid by the federal government to expand internet access in the state.

AT&T originally denied requests last week for records related to work it completed in the state to provide fixed wireless service access through the Connect America Fund, Public Service Commissioner Brandon Presley said.

The company agreed to comply after it was served a subpoena from the Mississippi Public Service Commission on Sept. 11.

Presley said Thursday, September 17, afternoon he was told by AT&T that he would be receiving the records by the end of the day.

“This victory goes to show that when you are willing to stand up to these Goliaths, they’ll back down,” Presley said.

President of AT&T in Mississippi Mayo Flynt said AT&T has informed the Mississippi Public Service Commission that the company

will provide the information that has been requested as long as “competitively sensitive” information, including the number of customers AT&T serves in Mississippi, is not released publicly. The documents will be able to be viewed by the government, Presley said.

“We have to give them some confidentially on that because they are in a competitive market,” Presley said.

The Connect America Fund is a multiyear federal program designed to expand access to broadband in rural areas of the country that are currently underserved. The Federal Communications Commission provides funding to service providers to subsidize the cost of building new network infrastructure or performing network upgrades.

Presley said a company representative had initially denied his office’s request for records when asked how many people in Mississippi had benefited from infrastructure installed by AT&T under the Connect America Fund project.

Presley’s office requested the records after receiving

some complaints from residents who said they haven’t been able to access service, Presley said.

AT&T has said it is on track to provide service to more than 133,000 Mississippi households by the end of the year.

Data provided by AT&T and made public by the Universal Service Administrative Company shows well over 133,000 addresses where AT&T says service has been deployed.

In addition, AT&T spokesperson Jim Greer said last week that deployment data that AT&T provides to the federal government is subject to audit and record retention.

Along with the number of actual subscribers to AT&T’s fixed wireless service, the Public Service Commission requested the number of complaints filed with the company by customers who have taken service. It also sought information on the number of Mississippians who applied for fixed wireless service based on AT&T’s assertion that it was available and were later determined not to be in an area covered.

Fall is creeping in

The leaves on our River Birch trees have started to turn beautiful yellows as they fall abundantly to our concrete driveway and our slowly dying green grass. The pinecones have been over plentiful this year and continue to drop along with the brown pine straw that clogs our lawn mower as it makes its final sweeps over our summer lawn. Even with the still stifling temperatures here in the South, fall is creeping into our next season.

I am beginning to see doors and some yards decorated with fall touches like hay bales, scarecrows, and even some “Happy Fall Y’all” signs hanging on doors and house fronts. Our town leaders are asking businesses to enter their store fronts in fall decorations vying for ‘best in show’. My grandchildren are looking forward to storing fishing rods and bringing out hunting gear and are ever on the lookout for deer

crossings and feed lots. I hear on the news or read in newspapers there is only seventy-two days to Thanksgiving, just a little over two months, and one hundred one days until Christmas, just three and a half months.

It really seems to me when we celebrate Halloween, Thanksgiving and Christmas are just a few blinks away.

We have been so confined, isolated, and sequestered from everybody and everything for the past seven

or eight months, I cannot help but wonder and question how the holiday season might play out this year? Will we be able to enjoy the big turkey and all the trimmings on Thanksgiving, sitting at the food laden table with our family? Will we gather around a Christmas tree and open gifts with our families and enjoy being together? Or, will we be “facetimeing” and using online cameras to say, “I am thankful for you” or “Merry Christmas?” For sure every day is a new

adventure, for me anyway. But I can truly say that I will meet the challenges head on and be thankful for just having life and being able to list the things I am thankful for and to get to say “Merry Christmas” this year in the mist of the disruptions to our lives.

I love being able to cook a one-pan meal and maybe serve a green or a fruit salad for a complete supper.

CHEESY CHICKEN ALFREDO CASSEROLE

- 3 skinless boneless chicken breasts,
- 8 oz. package of penne pasta,
- 16 oz jar Alfredo sauce,
- 1 ½ cups of shredded mozzarella cheese, divided,
- ¼ cup of milk,
- 1 t. onion powder,
- 1 t. garlic powder,
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese

Oven to 350*. Cook chicken breasts in water. Cook pasta till done and drain. Mix the chicken cut into pieces, with noodles, Alfredo sauce, ½ mozzarella cheese, milk, onion and garlic powder. Pour into a 13x9 dish and sprinkle the remaining mozzarella and the cheddar cheese on top. Bake for 25 minutes.

**Peggy Sims is a life-long resident of Attala County and columnist.*



Peggy’s Take

DRA funds to benefit Holmes CC lineman program

Press Release

On Thursday, September 17, the Delta Regional Authority (DRA) announced a \$4,982,686 investment that will boost economic development and improve the quality of life for Mississippi communities and residents. The investment will be matched by \$13 million and will attract an additional \$9.5 million in leveraged private investment (LPI) into the state of Mississippi.

The 17 new investment projects will improve water and sewer systems, update transportation infrastructure, and support innovative job training in communities across Mississippi. These projects are expected to create or retain 371 jobs, train 1,382 individuals, and affect nearly 7,500 families.

“The Delta Regional Authority’s \$4.9 million investment into 17 critical projects will strengthen economic success in the Mississippi Delta by improving vital infrastructure and creating opportunities to foster workforce development,” said DRA Federal Co-Chairman Chris Caldwell. “These investments highlight the importance of local and regional public-private partnerships in realizing the long-term success of infrastructure, business, and workforce projects to spur job growth

and ultimately improve business competitiveness in the region.”

Funding for these projects is provided by the States’ Economic Development Assistance Program (SEDAP), which provides direct investment into community-based and regional projects to support basic public infrastructure, transportation infrastructure, workforce training and education, and small businesses development with an emphasis on entrepreneurship, and the Community Infrastructure Fund (CIF), which targets physical infrastructure projects that help build safer, more resilient communities in the Delta region. DRA coordinates directly with the Office of the Governor for the State of Mississippi and nine local development districts in the state for program funding implementation.

“This is an exciting day for Mississippi and the future success of our economy. Thousands of Mississippians and their families across our state will have a brighter future, thanks to this almost \$5 million investment and over \$20 million in additional investments,” said Governor Tate Reeves (R-MS). “We are truly grateful for the Delta Regional Authority and their significant investment to

boost economic development in our state. Thanks to Delta Regional Authority, we can create more opportunities for our people to succeed here at home and position Mississippi to compete across the nation and the globe.”

“I am glad the Delta Regional Authority is continuing to invest in our communities to expand infrastructure, jobs, and economic development in Mississippi,” said U.S. Senator Roger Wicker (R-MS). “These upgrades will directly impact nearly 7,500 families and improve the overall quality of life for our residents.”

“The Delta Regional Authority’s targeted investments in these public infrastructure projects throughout Mississippi will improve public health and safety, in addition to supporting job opportunities that will help these communities continue to grow,” U.S. Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith (R-MS) said. “I commend the DRA for working with local leaders to move such projects forward.”

“I am elated about the \$4.9 million investment for 17 Mississippi projects awarded through the States’ Economic Development Assistance Program (SEDAP) and Community Infrastructure Fund (CIF),” said Congressman Bennie Thompson (D-MS



Conservation Corner

by James Cummins
Executive Director
of Wildlife Mississippi

The striped bass (*Morone saxatilis*), or “striper,” is native to most of the East Coast and along portions of the Gulf of Mexico. While stripers mostly inhabit the whole coast surf, reefs, tide rips, in-shore bars, estuaries, and bays they have also been widely introduced in the Mississippi River system. They are particularly active in areas with tidal currents and in the wash of breaking waves. Striped bass are the largest fish in the temperate bass family and grow as long as 6 feet. While the striped bass lives mostly in Coastal marine waters, they are anadromous and will swim into fresh water to spawn.

A schooling species, striped bass move about in

small groups during the first 2 years of life. After this period, they feed and migrate in large schools. The size of the adult striped bass serves to separate it from any other bass, except the white bass. With silvery sides dressed with 7 to 8 dark horizontal stripes extending from the back of the head to the base of the tail, it is easy to see how they were named. However, a small striper and a white bass held together look nearly identical but for one trait: the striper has two parallel patches of teeth on the tongue while the white bass only has one.

Striped bass can live up to 30 years, reaching weights of up to 100 pounds. However, an adult striper is more common-

2nd District). “The additional jobs that will be created and retained are an investment that will improve the quality of life for Mississippians.”

“The Delta Regional Authority continues to advance economic opportunities across the Delta region. Thanks to the DRA’s dedicated service, our state remains a great place to live, work, and raise a family. I’m grateful for the opportunity we have to work together to create a better future for our state,”

Congressman Michael Guest (R-MS 3rd District) said.

The following local project was funded by SEDAP:

- Electrical Lineworker Training Facility Construction | Goodman, MS: Holmes Community College will use DRA funds to construct a new electrical lineman training facility and emergency preparedness staging area. This investment is projected to train 150 individuals. DRA Investment: \$256,500/Total Investment: \$556,500.

ly around 50 pounds, with the female reaching a significantly greater size than the male. Spawning takes place in late spring to early summer when water temperatures are around 60 degrees. The stripers ascend rivers and congregate in swift waters where mating occurs. Fertile eggs are buoyant and drift for 3 days while they incubate. If the eggs do not stay adrift they sink to the bottom and suffocate.

Stripers eat a variety of foods, including other fish, such as flounder, alewives, smelt, silver hake, eels, and silversides as well as crabs, soft clams, lobsters, sea worms, small mussels, and squid. Although some feeding occurs throughout the day, they feed most actively at dusk and dawn. However, around midsummer they tend to become more nocturnal and feed throughout the night.

Angling after dusk or dawn is successful for most of the season, but around midsummer, night fishing is best. Fishing the shoreline proves to be most successful in areas where tidal rips, strong currents, or wave action creates turbulent waters. When trolling for bass along shoreline areas, the rod should be equipped with a high ratio conventional reel and either silicon carbide or aluminum oxide guides to prevent line wear. By choosing among monofilament, lead core or wire lines, trolling can be done at depths ranging from the surface to the bottom.