

*Remarks for the
Smart Growth-Sustainability Conference
February 21, 2002*

I'm proud to welcome you all to the Mississippi Gulf Coast and the Sustainability Conference.

The great American conservationist John Muir once wrote that “when one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world.”

Such is the nature of sustainability, the concept that the environmental systems that shape our lives and our communities are constantly intertwined and interacting.

This should be the nature of our public work as well.

The work we do to bring jobs and economic growth to Mississippi should be balanced with the work we do to protect our natural infrastructure.

We need to find the delicate balance between progress and conservation, and I know we can do it.

Mississippi is blessed with tremendous natural resources, resources we must conserve as our gift to future generations.

We're making headway. We have developed an aggressive Coastal Impact Assistance Plan to address the health of the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

The process that brought the plan to life included three formal, public meetings, plus countless other meetings between representatives of the Department of Environmental Quality, the supervisors, higher education and private industry.

Through their cooperative efforts, the Mississippi Gulf Coast is going to see some important changes in its habitat protection, water quality, infrastructure, and fisheries.

The projects in this plan will mean a great deal to those who live and work in this area. They will benefit the fishermen who depend on a healthy Gulf of Mexico to make their living. They will preserve an important part of the culture of the coast.

By taking a step back and looking at the issues from a different point of view, we're able to see how all the issues impacting the Coast work with each other.

In 1855, Chief Seattle said, “humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things connect.”

We recognize that all things connect in Mississippi. Together, we’re keeping the connection strong and healthy – and it will benefit our people, our economy, and our land.

That will be our gift to future generations.

I appreciate the opportunity to be here this morning. You have an aggressive agenda and great potential here, and I look forward to working with you to make it happen.