



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

REGION 4
ATLANTA FEDERAL CENTER
61 FORSYTH STREET
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30303-8960

JAN 11 2011

Ms. Tennie White
COCEJ
430 Bounds Street
Suite 19
Jackson, Mississippi 39206

RE: Freedom of Information Act Request No. 4-FOI-00174-12

Dear Ms. White:

This letter is in response to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request of December 15, 2011, regarding the Hercules site located in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. Specifically, you requested copies of any letters from Melvin Williams, representing Mobile Bouie Neighborhood Association, Hattiesburg, Mississippi to Regional Administrator Gwen Keyes-Fleming or other EPA Region 4 employees in 2011.

Please find enclosed the record responsive to your request. The fees for processing this request are waived as **de minimis**.

Should you have questions regarding this response, please contact Urshula Swann, Freedom of Information Specialist, at (404) 562-8179.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lou Ann Gross".

Lou Ann Gross, Chief
FOIA and Records Services Section

Enclosure

RA-11-001-7198-RA

MELVIN WILLIAMS, PRESIDENT
422 Mobile Street
Hattiesburg, Mississippi 39401



Regional Administrator Gwen Keys Flemings:
USEPA REGION 4
61 Forsyth Street, S.W.
Mail Code: 9T25
Atlanta, GA 30303-8960
keysfleming.gwendolyn@epa.gov

Dear Mrs. Gwen Keys Fleming,

I am the president of the Mobile Bouie Neighborhood Association, Mr. Melvin Williams. It was brought to my attention on several occasions that Mr. Sherri Jones and other members of the coalition have been writing you on behalf of the impacted communities surrounding the Hercules Incorporated site. This arrogance on behalf of Mr. Jones and his group to:

- 1) identify themselves as the spokesperson(s) for the communities of Hattiesburg, MS;
- 2) to depict themselves as the only organization that cares about the community and
- 3) to belittle the community engagement efforts of anyone besides themselves is a discourtesy to not just the regulatory agencies he dislikes, but to the Neighborhood Associations that have spent countless hours at meetings and in discussions with these same regulatory agencies. It would be a calamity to the city of Hattiesburg for EPA to discount the efforts being conducted through partnership with MDEQ and the impacted community.

The Mobile Bouie Community has experienced success working with MDEQ in addressing community concerns and foresees a continued amiable working relationship.

It is my concern that the Coalition can feel so empowered that they make attempts to discredit the hard work being performed by MDEQ in partnership with EPA. We firmly stand behind our state agency and would be **very displeased** should EPA take any action to disrupt, dismember or compromise in any way the current community engagement team or the established relationships.

It is with much distress, concern, and frustration that I submit this letter in response to several letters and complaints pertaining to Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ) and Mrs. Melissa Collier, Director, MDEQ Office of Community Engagement.

Due to MDEQ and Mrs. Collier, the Mobile – Bouie Community Organization has **always** been informed of the ongoing environmental projects in our City. The special interest group would have you believe differently.

As a citizen of Hattiesburg, MS, I am very much in favor of MDEQ continuing to provide our Organization with information and allowing us to be a part of the environmental business process. Enough is Enough for most of us. This is deja-vu for me with Forrest County Environmental Support Group. Another community group was made promises years ago at the Tronox site and FCEST did not live up to promised expectations. They are now trying to take over the entire City of Hattiesburg and for that matter the State of Mississippi, pretending to have concerns for the community.

From all indications, some of FCEST members, and most of the Coalition of Communities for Environmental Justice, **do not** reside in the City of Hattiesburg. So please explain to me how they can make a request and be heard over those of us who have resided here and have lived closest to the facilities all of our life?

- ◆ I am appalled (to say the least); about the attention these individuals receive from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as though they are the **only** community organization of concern. They have developed and provided Organization charts to EPA as if they have a direct-line to the EPA and the EPA staff.
- ◆ I am appalled that EPA acknowledges and recognizes this Organization over Mobile-Bouie Homeowners Association and North Main Historical Homeowners Association, for the Hercules and Lagoon projects.
- ◆ I am appalled that EPA doesn't realize there are 82 other counties, in the State of Mississippi.
- ◆ I am appalled the Coalition and FCEST consider Mobile-Bouie and North Main Homeowners Association dumb, uneducated, and non-technical individuals, as they basically indicated to you in a previous letter.
- ◆ I am appalled they feel we need their assistance when our members are educated, scientifically sound, and environmentally conscience in every aspect of the way. We have our own technical advisor. We do not need Mr. Jones, Ms White or any of their members trying to educate us (to act like them) or to stand as a technical advisory for us... no way. We are preparing to challenge them and the EPA in every way possible to keep our focus on the entire community. The Coalition/FCEST talked of MDEQ causing a division...if they would only look in the mirror, division would stare them back in the face.

So....Why Hattiesburg, MS.? My opinion, it appears, to be an attempt to **belittle and degrade our Mayor and Council (the best representative we have ever had in Hattiesburg, MS)**. It appears EPA caters to special interest groups, out of fear and self gratification. It appears EPA has staff not willing to work with communities but to work with/for these special interest groups.

Due to EPA's staff inadequacy to stand up for what's right, they have chosen to fall for anything including the notion of being intimidated by the special interest group. It is apparent that the squeaky wheel **still gets the oil**. The message is very evident that they (EPA staff) must over compensate these individuals due to fear and lack of respect to the real impacted community.

I have heard and been to several City of Hattiesburg Council meetings. I am aware of all the letters and communications you have received regarding Hercules, the Lagoon, USA Yeast and Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality from FCEST and the Coalition. I am aware of all the complaints and accusations of non-compliance, non-communication, and MDEQ failure to its Mission, etc. I am aware of the personal attacks against MDEQ staff.

Administrators/Ladies... when does it STOP? It is time for EPA to realize; in this City...."**Enough is Enough**".

Where has Forrest County Environmental Support Team (FCEST) and the Coalition been all these years while Mobile-Bouie has been in existence? What do they stand to gain, now that the Hercules and other Hattiesburg issues have been brought to light by **MDEQ** (otherwise, how else would Mobile-Bouie or FCEST would have known about the environmental issues)? I can't imagine where this State would be without MDEQ. EPA cannot manage daily operations in Mississippi from Atlanta. I ask you to please watch the messages you are sending and the expectations that you are clearly not managing.

Mobile-Bouie is not about "individualism" rather we stand for the *entire* community. This is what environmental justice is about: *communities not individuals*. As a tax payer, I hope you would direct your time and attention to those of us who want to be involved, educated, and knowledgeable of our environment.

We are not a part of a **lawsuit**. Therefore, I ask that you **stop** wasting "*our*" tax dollars to build a case for the special interest group. They say this is not about money. However, they complain about the very persons who have always worked for their pay and are on contract. At least they work for their pay. The special interest needs money and attention. They love to be on the radio, television and quoted in the paper. The special interest needs ATTENTION and EPA gives them a platform to promote something they didn't receive as a child (Attention). It is sad in these days and time to know we now have "adult bullies", who are training "future adult bullies". Mobile-Bouie needs our community site cleaned and monitored by MDEQ, without the distractions from EPA and the special interest group.

I understand you provide funding for MDEQ to run State programs. If this is true, then **STOP** trying to run it for MDEQ, due to a small group of individuals. Obviously, the EPA felt the need to delegate programs to States or there would not be State programs. If you feel you can do a better job, then do as these individuals (FCEST and the Coalition), are instructing/demanding you to do. Pack up your bags and move to Mississippi. I can assure you it will only be a matter of time before they are **complaining** about EPA, also.

FCEST **will not** and **do not** speak for Mobile-Bouie Homeowners Association, we speak for ourselves. FCEST do not need to provide any information pertaining to Mobile-Bouie being a part of a steering committee. We are planning to work with the City to develop a structured comprehensive plan to address all of our environmental concerns with a newly developed Community of Neighborhoods group. We plan to empower the community and apply for grant funding to educate, involve, include and be transparent of the environmental concerns in Hattiesburg, MS for the community.

FCEST is always welcome to attend meetings (the 4th Saturday of each month @ 9:30 AM). However, it must be understood, we **will not** allow our meeting to be disrupted, rather we will continue to be **productive** and vigilant in our quest to share and exchange information. We will continue to work for the impacted community with our City officials, Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality and the Environmental Protection Agency pertaining to our environmental concerns.

The next time either of you ladies are in the State of Mississippi (again consisting of 82 counties) it would be a pleasure to have you visit *our Community Organization*, rather than "by passing" and over looking us as if we do not exist. You have made several trips to our State and not once have you dropped by to talk to the group who has a different agenda and mind set. Not once have we complained until now. We need your willingness to work with our community and our State Regulators. We do not need media, parental and social Attention. Most of us received "parental" satisfaction and attention as a child.

We are proud professionals. We do not try to tare our Agency's, Government, and individuals down. We are a respectful, resourceful community Organization. However, if screaming and demanding will get your attention to visit other Community Organizations in Mississippi, to educate and show you a different approach to "community engagement", then we will prepare to start screaming to have our voices heard and to receive the same attention.

In the event you haven't recognized our Mayor, is a black man running for Governor. The EPA tactics and timing could very well align with damaging his reputation to seek office in the State of Mississippi. As black females in your positions, I am sure you both understand what tactics an

agency such as EPA (and individuals) can do to damage his campaign. We therefore request you and your staff **respect** our Mayor and his City, **respect** our Organization, **and respect** our MDEQ, by working with key stakeholders and the impacted community. I have never heard of EPA being in Hattiesburg, MS before Mayor Dupree took office. Where was the EPA during all the other previous Administrations of non-color?

Mayor Dupree is the only Mayor that has ever questioned or requested assistance pertaining to environmental issues in Hattiesburg, MS. Do your homework, check the MDEQ files. No other Mayor in the City of Hattiesburg has ever sent any letters, request or concerns for our community before Mayor Dupree.

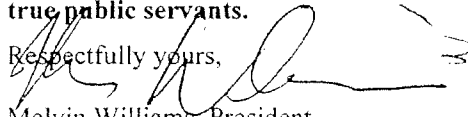
We resent your timing to apparently try to fast track your political agenda and to try to allow some other organization to come in and destroy and eliminate the relation of MDEQ, the City of Hattiesburg Mayor and Council, Mobile-Bouie and North Main Homeowners Association from the process. due to a request from a special interest group whom you have allowed to intimidate and harass you. We hope EPA will also continue to be a fair, honest and a consistent stakeholder.

EPA, in the best interest of **all** concern, **Stop** giving in to the rhetoric, please...perform your sampling/monitoring efforts, cleanup of the site and allow our MDEQ continue to do their job. Believe it or not...we know and have built some trust with them regardless to what the special interest group would have you to believe. We would like to trust you at some point and time. However, your present approach with the special interest group is still damaging to those of us who have **genuine concerns** and **not financial concerns**.

We appreciate all the assistance you have given our community and look forward to working with EPA, MDEQ, and all other relevant entities involved in the City of Hattiesburg. I digress and will await a favorable response to our "community needs" pertaining to our long lasting community relations with our State Regulatory Agency – MDEQ.

Ms Trudy Fisher: Let me take this time and opportunity to "Thank You" for always allowing your staff to give of their time and service to the citizens of Hattiesburg, MS. We would not have been informed if it were not for them and the way they are managed. They are the epitome of **true public servants**.

Respectfully yours,


Melvin Williams, President
Mobile-Bouie Homeowners Association

Cc: Administrator Lisa Jackson
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Melissa Collier, Director, Office of Community Engagement, MDEQ
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**PUBLIC LISTENING
SESSION**

**MOBILE BOUIE NEIGHBORHOOD
ASSOCIATION**

AND

**NORTH MAIN HISTORIC
NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION**

**For Questions or
More
Information,
Contact**

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SPECIAL INVITED GUESTS:

US ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
HERCULES INCORPORATION / ASHLAND
CITY OF HATTIESBURG/ FORREST COUNTY SUPERVISORS
MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Tuesday, September 27, 2011

6:00 PM – 8:30 PM

CE Roy Community Center

**300 East 5th Street
Hattiesburg, MS 39401-2020
(601) 545-4583**

The purpose of this meeting is to:

- ✓ Listen to community issues and concerns**

- ✓ Encourage a dialogue with the community to identify strengths, challenges and opportunities for future communication**