

# Deputy Gov. Visits Bunge Grain, Announces Statewide Water Availability Plan - State Gazette

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by Rachel Townsend

On Tuesday, June 19, Tennessee Deputy Gov. Jim Henry and Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation Commissioner Dr. Shari Meghreblian, as well as numerous city and state officials, were welcomed to Bunge Grain for a discussion regarding Gov. Bill Haslam's TN H2O plan.

TN H2O is overseen by TDEC and is expected to provide a statewide plan for future water availability in Tennessee, including an assessment of current water resources and recommendations to help ensure Tennessee has an abundance of water resources to support economic growth and future residents.

The plan will focus particular attention to surface and groundwater, water and wastewater infrastructure, water reuse and land conservation and institutional and legal framework.

According to Henry, TN H2O will focus energy and efforts toward utilizing groundwater to make agricultural production more efficient and to prevent crop loss during droughts. Henry noted the Mississippi River's vital role in transporting goods across world and his vision of seeing all three regions of Tennessee share sustainable success through a water availability plan.

During the program, introductions and opening remarks on TN H2O were made by Jimmy Moody, a local farmer whose Dyer County roots in agriculture trace back roughly 100 years. Moody spoke briefly on the importance of good irrigation, and how technology has transformed agriculture over the years of his career.

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Col. Michael Ellicot, Corps of Engineers commander of the Memphis District, discussed the important role the river plays in local commerce, making a roughly \$37 billion economic impact. was also present at the event. Ellicot is responsible for flood damage, navigation, and other operations along 610-miles of the Mississippi and White Rivers. Ellicot emphasized the key roles of the Mainline Levee and Little Levee, and how local farmers in the area depend on those levees to protect their homes and crops from flooding.

Meghreblian stated there are nearly 100 volunteers, all experts in their field, who have been participating in working groups to develop the TN H2O plan since December of 2017. Meghreblian says the plan is not about regulation but about maintaining water availability across the state, and addressing the challenges of each region of the state and its varying geography.

Meghreblian took time to introduce and thank Tennessee Commissioner of Agriculture Jai Templeton for his support and efforts in working alongside TDEC.

In October of 2018, a draft of TN H2O will be submitted to Haslam and made available for public input.