



## **Mississippi Biomass and Renewable Energy Council is Adapting to the Changing World of Sustainability**

By Joseph Linton

**For more than a decade, the Mississippi Biomass and Renewable Energy Council (MBREC) has sought to further develop the Magnolia State’s natural resources in renewable energy and sustainability. This organization represents members from such diverse groups as agriculture, the legal profession, academia and corporate finance. As MBREC President John Mabry likes to point out, “everyone is welcome” in the MBREC ranks in order to spread awareness of renewable energy technology throughout the state, region and nation.**

MBREC is a nonprofit organization that serves as the voice of sustainable industry in Mississippi. Long known for presenting the annual Southern Bioproducts and Renewable Energy Conference, MBREC has taken an active role in educating the public in areas of sustainability, renewable energy and energy efficiency. Close ties with researchers at universities across the state and throughout the entire Southeast and economic development organizations, such as the Mississippi Development Authority, have helped MBREC reach members of all parts of this multifaceted field.

MBREC’s leadership brings a wealth of experience. The council is governed by a board of directors from the public and private sectors, including academia, researchers, small- business owners and stakeholders in the areas of sustainability and economic development.

Originally, the organization was known simply as the Mississippi Biomass Council, with an exclusive emphasis on biomass-based resources such as biofuels, biochemicals and other related products. But with advances in renewable energy technology and its effects on Mississippi, a name change and a new area of concentration evolved in the mid-2000s. However, the council’s evolution did not end there. In order to remain active in the constantly shifting field of renewable energy, MBREC has sought out new ways to best serve its members and the State of

Mississippi as a whole.

Strategic Biomass Solutions (SBS), a program of Innovate Mississippi that is dedicated to connecting entrepreneurs, investors and economic developers in order to commercialize renewable energy technologies, has long worked hand-in-hand with MBREC in various efforts. Recently, this relationship has progressed into a formal partnership, and Innovate Mississippi will serve as a “home” for MBREC and help organize events and functions and manage member services. Both MBREC and Innovate Mississippi personnel are excited about the future potential for this relationship, believing that it serves to make both organizations stronger.

“Mississippi is currently experiencing a convergence of research and economic viability in the area of renewable energy,” said Jeffrey Rupp, director of the Technology Resource Institute at Mississippi State University and a member of the MBREC board of directors. “By teaming up with Innovate Mississippi, MBREC immediately expands its reach and resources and can focus its efforts on being the source of providing up-to-date information on the science, politics and business of the rapidly expanding renewable energy sector.”

Sumesh Arora, Ph.D., director of SBS, is also enthusiastic about this new venture, and stated that “we will focus on building a strong membership for MBREC in the coming year and hope that this organization lends itself to becoming the marketplace for renewable energy and energy-efficiency businesses in Mississippi.”

Energy and energy efficiency have become more and more important to our state, nation and world. As more sustainability- related projects locate to Mississippi and more citizens are involved in this area, the need will only increase for an organization that can spread accurate and pertinent information regarding the field, as well as provide the opportunity for stakeholders and interested parties to network and share ideas. By partnering with Innovate Mississippi, MBREC stands in the best position to meet these goals and continue serving as the voice of the sustainable industry in Mississippi.