

Biography – Chris Wells, Executive Director, Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality

Chris Wells serves the great State of Mississippi as Executive Director of the Mississippi Department of Environmental Quality, a position to which he was appointed by Governor Tate Reeves in October 2020. Wells began his career with MDEQ in November 2007, providing legal support for the Environmental Compliance and Enforcement Division. He has also served as the agency's Chief of Staff (2014-2020) and as Director of the agency's Office of Restoration (2017-2020).

As Executive Director, Wells leads a staff of approximately 350 and oversees an annual budget exceeding \$250 million. Guided by MDEQ's mission to safeguard Mississippians by protecting the state's air, land, and water while fostering wise economic growth, he represents the state in key environmental restoration efforts—serving as the state's Trustee for the Deepwater Horizon Natural Resource Damage Assessment under the Oil Pollution Act and as Mississippi's representative on the Gulf Coast Ecosystem Restoration Council created by the RESTORE Act. Wells also serves as current President of the Environmental Council of the States (ECOS), the national association of state and territorial environmental agency leaders (September 2025-September 2026).

A native of Brandon and an avid outdoorsman, Wells' love of Mississippi's natural resources inspired him to pursue a career in environmental protection. He earned a bachelor's degree in Chemical Engineering from Mississippi State University (1996) and a law degree from Mississippi College School of Law (1999). After law school, he served as a law clerk to U.S. District Court Judge William H. Barbour, Jr., before practicing law with Scanlon, Sessums, Parker & Dallas (2000 to 2007). He has also served as an adjunct professor at Mississippi College School of Law for 10 years (2010-2019).