



Grassroots

Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta
2003 Annual Report



The Atlanta Fed's grassroots connections stretch across areas as diverse as the swamps of Louisiana (cover) and the city of Atlanta, home of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Chief pathologist Dr. Sherif R. Zaki (shown above, center) uses a slide of the SARS virus to talk about the CDC's role in understanding and combating major infectious diseases. Viewpoints gathered from its wide constituency help the Atlanta Fed better understand the Southeast's complex economy.

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The Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta is one of twelve regional Reserve Banks in the United States that, together with the Board of Governors in Washington, D.C., make up the Federal Reserve System—the nation’s central bank. Since its establishment by an act of Congress in 1913, the Federal Reserve System’s primary role has been to foster a sound financial system and a healthy economy.

To advance this goal, the Atlanta Fed helps formulate monetary policy, supervises banks and bank and financial holding companies, and provides payment services to depository institutions and the federal government.

Through its six offices in Atlanta, Birmingham, Jacksonville, Miami, Nashville, and New Orleans, the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta serves the Sixth Federal Reserve District, which comprises Alabama, Florida, Georgia, and parts of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee.



Jack Guynn, president and chief executive officer, and Pat Barron, first vice president, of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta.

Message from the President

Today's Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta is a much different place than it was nearly forty years ago when I started working here. And the pace of change has quickened in the last few years. This shift is most apparent in our payment services, which have responded to other dramatic changes in the financial services industry. Technology and increased competition have prompted—indeed, forced—banking organizations to cut costs, consolidate, merge, and then do it all again. Likewise, the Fed has aggressively turned to technology, standardization, consolidation, and other workflow improvements to enhance efficiency and better meet the needs of financial firms that are nationwide, even global, in their scope of operations. And we've done so not only in payments but also in other functions as well as in support and overhead.

Despite this confluence of forces pulling the nation's central bank toward a more centralized business model, our fundamental goals have remained the same. Reiterating the Fed's charter, the Federal Reserve System strategic plan directs us “to provide the nation with a safer, more flexible, and more stable monetary and financial system.” And the Fed continues to function through the structure of twelve Federal Reserve Banks around the nation and the Board of Governors in Washington, D.C.

To some, this structure may seem anachronistic or at odds with the Fed's broad mandates. I contend, however, that the inherent advantages in our regional structure continue to support our ability to effectively fulfill our core responsibilities. What's more, I would even argue that this structure

helps us navigate the turbulent waters of change and enhances a monetary policy that fosters the stability and prosperity upon which our society relies.

The Fed's decentralized structure facilitates the flow of information with our constituents—banks who use our payment services, banks who are supervised by Fed examiners, and businesses and households, whose economic decisions are profoundly affected by monetary policy actions. Through their insights at the grassroots level, business and civic leaders contribute to policy at conceptual stages. And this vast network of constituents in their respective regions enables Reserve Banks to do a much better job of helping individuals and organizations understand policy changes.

This annual report explores how the Fed's grassroots foundation not only remains relevant today but actually enhances how we perform our core functions of monetary policy formulation, bank supervision, and payment services as well as the educational mission that is increasingly important for a public policy organization in today's complex and rapidly changing world.



Jack Gynn

Cover

Atchafalaya Swamp in central Louisiana

Back cover

An airboat cuts between the mangrove trees and cypress knees near Evangeline Parish in Louisiana.

Credits

The 2003 Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta Annual Report was created and produced by the Public Affairs Department.

Publications Director

Lynne Anservitz

**Graphic Designer and
Art Director**

Peter Hamilton

Writer

William Smith

Editors

Lynn Foley
Tom Heintjes

Photography

Flip Chalfant, represented by
Will Sumpter and Associates, Atlanta
Photo on page 17 by Kevin Garrett

Printing

Seiz Printing