



GIPSA News

The newsletter of the employees of the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration

February 2010

2009 Administrator's Awards

J. Dudley Butler

I'm delighted to announce the recipients of the 2009 Administrator's Awards. In an agency that is characterized by exceptionally hardworking, talented professionals, these individuals were singled out by their peers and colleagues for this prestigious recognition. My thanks to each member of the GIPSA team for the tremendous work that you do. My congratulations to the recipients of the 2009 Administrator's Awards for your extraordinary efforts to further GIPSA's mission.

DISTINGUISHED INDIVIDUAL AWARD

Margaret Mills, Western Regional Office, received this recognition for performing her supervisory responsibilities at levels which exceed performance expectations and repeatedly demonstrating extra effort through collateral duty assignments.

SUPERIOR INDIVIDUAL AWARD

Kim Harper, Portland Field Office, was recognized for his creative and proactive efforts, which have resulted in outstanding and significant contributions to the mission of the Agency and resulted in improved customer service.

John Uecker, Western Regional Office, was conferred this award for going above and beyond by persevering and overcoming very difficult pressure put on him by a party under investigation, which resulted in one of the largest fines imposed upon a registrant within the Western Regional Office for violating the P&SP Act and regulations for failing to pay for livestock timely.

DISTINGUISHED GROUP AWARD

Brian Burk, Nancy Speer, Douglas Neesen, James Morcaldi, Rod Prather, and Kraig Roesch, Western Regional Office, were recognized for demonstrating professionalism, intrinsic motivation, and diligence in an investigation that resulted in an order which caused a chronic violator of the P&SP Act to discontinue operations.

Continued, see Administrator's Awards on page 3.

Names in the News

PERSONNEL

Craig Hoover, League City, is the new supervisory agricultural commodity grader in Galveston.

Ray Lavine was selected to be the assistant field office manager in League City, Texas. During his more than 35 years with the agency, **Ray** has served in a number of capacities including assistant field office manager in the Houston office and industrial scale specialist in the League City field office.

Alan Wadyko, League City, has been selected to be a supervisory agricultural commodity grader in the League City office.

Tracy Walton has joined the Information Technology Staff's Application Development Branch as a .NET programmer. Coming from CACI Federal in Virginia, Tracy has C# and .NET experience and will be assigned to the FGISonline transition and knowledge transfer project.

RETIREMENTS

Frank Jackson, New Orleans, retired on February 2, 2010, after 34 years of Federal service. **Frank** noted that his years with FGIS/GIPSA were rewarding and fun. He had the opportunity to visit and work with many from headquarters and other offices. The work experience he gained

gave him a great appreciation and respect for every aspect of the agency and all of its employees. According to **Frank**, "one of my fondest memories while working with FGIS/GIPSA was being a part of the Management Development Program in 1990. During the 12 months of training, a group of us became very good friends. Although some members of the group have retired and moved on to bigger and better things, our friendship remains intact even as of today." We wish **Frank** well in his retirement.

CONDOLENCES

Harold Rosenberg, retiree from the FGIS Compliance Division, died on August 20, 2009, after a long battle with Alzheimer's disease. He was a long time employee of the USDA.

AWARDS

Carl Beckwith, New Orleans, received a time-off award for providing superior service to our customers.

Janine Goodson, Kansas City, received a spot award for going above and beyond the call of duty for the good of GIPSA.

Vernett Knight, New Orleans, received a spot award for providing superior service to our customers.

Malia Koontz, Des Moines, received a spot award for dedication and support provided to GIPSA during a period where several PSU employees were absent.

Regina Pankowski, Washington, DC, received a spot award for completing special projects in an exceptionally competent and timely manner for the H1N1 Task Force.

Joseph Russelburg and **Wendal Dillon**, New Orleans, received time-off awards for providing excellent service to our external customers.

Bernadine Turley and **Ernestine Taplin** received spot awards for their exceptional leadership skills in helping employees with their GIPSA training.

Lowell Watts, **Walter Harness**, and **Tom Livings**, New Orleans, received spot awards for their excellent representation of GIPSA while conducting a tour at an export elevator.

Phyllis Zeno, New Orleans, received a time-off award for her excellent job performance toward ensuring the job of the agency is efficiently achieved.

Administrator's Awards, from page 1.

DISTINGUISHED GROUP AWARD

Bill Bates and **Byron School**, Field Management Division (FMD), Washington, DC; **Wade Berteau**, FMD, New Orleans; **Ruth Goff**, **Larry Freese**, **Roger Friedrich**, and **Shane Rumsey**, all of the Technical Services Division, Kansas City; **Ross Heiman** and **Mary Vick**, FMD, Kansas City; **Byron Reilly**, International Affairs, Washington, DC; and **Ron Beukema**, IT Staff, Washington, DC, received this recognition for their extra effort, skill, and creativity in collaborating with the Grain Elevator and Processors Society and Kansas State University to develop a 15-module course on the U.S. grain inspection system.

EEO/CIVIL RIGHTS AWARD

William Ashley, Compliance Division, received this recognition for his efforts, enthusiasm, and dedication in recruiting Washington Internships for Native American Students and summer interns, and other minority recruitment efforts in GIPSA.

SAFETY AWARD

James Davis, League City, was recognized for his quick thinking and excellent judgment, which resulted in the evacuation of GIPSA employees and aided in preventing a potential deadly disaster.

NON-GIPSA SUPPORT

Jan Elizabeth Mitchell, Assistant United States Attorney, Chief, Civil Division, District of New Mexico; and **Virgil Lewis**, Assistant United States Attorney, Chief, Civil Division, District of New Mexico, were recognized for assisting the P&SP Distinguished Group Award recipients with their investigation.

Are EEO/CR issues or concerns affecting your employment with GIPSA? Do you have questions? Need help? Then let your voice be heard.

Call the EEO Advisory Committee at...
1-800-639-5167

Civil Rights Hotline

Issuances

Terri Henry, Washington, DC

- FGIS Program Notice 10-06, "R Biopharm Inc., Ridascreen Fast DON Test Method," dated December 28, 2009
- FGIS Program Notice 10-07, "Reveal® for Aflatoxin Test Method," dated December 28, 2009
- FGIS Policy Memorandum Reference No. 225, "Certification of Moisture Results Outside Approved Calibration Range," dated January 8, 2010
- FGIS Policy Memorandum Reference No. 226, "Fumigating Slack Holds and Slack Tanks of Vessels," dated January 8, 2010
- FGIS Policy Memorandum Reference No. 227, "Sample Size Requirement DON testing-Corn," dated January 20, 2010

Regulatory Info

Tess Butler, Washington, DC

Federal Register

- Proposed Posting, Posting, and Deposting of Stockyards, published 01/26/10

FGIS Matters...!

Randall Jones, Washington, DC



Randall Jones

2010 is sure off to a busy start. Total grain export inspections during the first 17 weeks of the fiscal year are almost 15 percent above last year—largely due to the massive volume of soybean inspections, most of which have been heading to China. Soybean inspections over this time period are 42 percent above last year, while corn and wheat inspections are down a bit (3 percent and 12 percent, respectively). I know that all this volume means more work for you, and I want to thank you again for the long hours many of you have been putting in – including work during and on the holidays. Over half of FGIS’ employees in the field worked one of the last few holidays. That’s dedication.

In January, I had the pleasure of visiting the Pacific Northwest. **Administrator Butler** and I toured export facilities in Washington State and met with employees in the Portland, Oregon, office. We also met with **Dan Newhouse, Bob Gore, and Randy Deike** from the Washington State Department of Agriculture and discussed issues related to the official inspection and weighing of exported grain and commodities from ports located in the State of Washington. It was great to see everyone

in Portland, and I appreciate that time you spent with us. By the way, to all those who have never seen the Portland field office, make sure you stop in if you’re ever nearby. What a spot!

On January 25, 2010, I had the pleasure of kicking off GIPSA’s Leadership Development Program in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. It was a great opportunity to visit with the participants and share some ideas about the future of our agency. As I’ve said before, we have a really extraordinary team of employees in GIPSA, and I encourage everyone to take advantage of the wealth that surrounds them. Particularly for FGIS in the years to come, capturing the skills that exist within the official inspection system is paramount to our continued success.

I also had a chance to meet with producers and industry members to hear their views on a possible revision of the U.S. Standard for Wheat. On January 26, 2010, **Bob Lijewski, Jennifer Porter,** and I met with the North American Export Grain Association, North American Millers Association, National Grain and Feed Association, National Association for Wheat Growers, and the US Wheat Associates. We can anticipate some suggested changes coming from our industry stakeholders.

Next month, look for some major events in the world of FGISonline. FGIS Official Service Provider Licensing (FOL) will be released on February 9, 2010, for field offices and official agencies. This program will allow people to take their written tests online, enable the proctor to enter practical results online and receive immediate notification of pass/fail, notify people of license renewals, and much more. The training for FOL has begun and will continue through February. Also, the Quality Assurance and Control (QAC) program will be released on February 18, 2010, and will help strengthen the results of the entire official system. The Grading Services Lab will be the first to implement QAC, and I’m sure they’ll work all the kinks out for a smooth transition of QAC to our official agencies.

Keep doing the good work you do. Until next month...



ACG Tom Webb on the “ship desk” at the Columbia Grain facility in Portland

Ethics Training 2010

Caroline Thorpe, Washington, DC

Ethics training was assigned in AgLearn to all employees and confidential filers in January. Completion deadlines differ: confidential filers must complete the training by June 30, 2010; for all other employees the deadline for completion is December 31, 2010.

This year, the ethics courses found on your Learning Plan were selected and assigned by the Department. They are: Basic Post-Employment Restrictions, Ethics: Political Activity and Ethics: Use of Government Travel Card. All GIPSA employees do not have travel cards. If you do not have a travel card, you can substitute "Ethics: Gifts from Outside Sources."

Because the Department is now assigning specific courses, you will see one course that we, in GIPSA, took last year. Because you have done it recently, you should breeze through it! After completing your required ethics courses for 2010, you may wish to expand your knowledge of ethics further. You can assign in AgLearn what seems most relevant. Some of these courses include: Ethics: Gifts Between Employees, Ethics: Seeking Non-Federal Employment, Ethics: Financial Disclosure, and Ethics: Acceptance of Payment from a Non-Federal Source for Travel Expenses.

Another source is the USDA Ethics web site; <http://www.usda-ethics.net/>. This is one of the best ethics sites in the government has a straight forward FAQ site to answer <http://www.usda-ethics.net/faq/index.htm>.

For employees who do not have computer access, a new 2010 paper version will be forthcoming.

FGIS Displays

Jennifer Porter, assistant to the deputy administrator, FGIS, has assumed responsibility for housing and distributing the FGIS display cases. One set will be housed at the FMD, Beacon Office location in Kansas City and one will be housed in the Office of the Deputy Administrator, FGIS, Washington, DC, office.

If you would like to reserve the displays for future events, please contact **Jennifer** at 202-720-9170 or e-mail Jennifer.G.Porter@usda.gov.

Employee Assistance Program

Call for confidential help.

1-800-222-0364

BLACK HISTORY MONTH



FEBRUARY 2010

Your eOPF

Don't forget to register for 24/7 access to your electronic Official Personnel Folder (eOPF). First time login users must have an eAuthentication ID and password and complete a one-time registration.

Your eOPF is an electronic version of your Official Personnel Folder and contains all of the official records required to document your federal career. If you have not completed the eOPF registration, please follow the steps outlined in the "eOPF Registration Using eAuthentication Guide" along with other related documents which can be found on the inGIPSA website at <http://ingipsa/Employee-Resources/Benefits.aspx>

For Your Health

Mavis Rogers, Washington, DC



You can now add “Blackberry Thumb” to the list of workplace maladies says the American Physical Therapy Association (APTA). Blackberry Thumb refers to an increasingly common, repetitive-stress injury stemming from use of the popular handheld electronic devices. This stress injury causes pain and/or numbness in the thumbs and joints of the hand.

The condition is caused by spending too much time on these devices checking and composing e-mails, instant messaging, and accessing the Internet. “The use of PDAs (personal digital assistants) is no longer limited to the eight hours spent in the workplace,” Margot Miller, president of the APTA Occupational Health Specialist Interest Group, said in a prepared statement. “More and more people are depending on these devices to stay in touch with friends and family before and after the work day and on the weekends, as well as having access to work when they leave the office. That is where the heart of the problem lies.”

Many PDA users are middle-aged and overuse of the handheld devices can aggravate underlying arthritis. Because the keyboard of the PDA is so small, and because the thumb, which is the least dexterous part of the hand, is overtaxed (for fast typing), the risk of injury just skyrockets.

The APTA offers the following tips on how to avoid Blackberry Thumb:

- Take frequent breaks from your PDA. Don’t type for more than a few minutes at a time.
- Write fewer and shorter messages. Learn to abbreviate your responses.
- Try to avoid thumb-typing. Use your other fingers to type.
- If possible, place a support in your lap when using a PDA so that your wrists are in a more upright position and not flexed or bent.

The APTA also recommends the following simple exercise:

- Tap each finger with the thumb of the same hand. Repeat five times.
- Alternate tapping the palm of your hand and the back of your hand against your thigh as quickly as you can. Repeat 20 times.
- Open your hands and spread your fingers as far apart as possible. Hold for 10 seconds and repeat eight times.
- Fold your hands together and turn your palms away from your body as you extend your arms forward. You should only feel a gentle stretch. Hold for 10 seconds and repeat eight times.
- Fold your hands together, turn your palms away from your body, and extend your arms overhead. You should feel the stretch in your upper torso and shoulders to hand. Hold for 10 seconds and repeat eight times.

Courtesy: FOH Employee Assistance Program

GIPSA News is the employee newsletter of the USDA Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration. Send your news, ideas, suggestions, comments, questions, or thoughts for the next issue to:

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by February 25, 2010!

Retiring? To be included on our email distribution list after you retire from GIPSA, please send your email address to dana.b.stewart@usda.gov.

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