



GIPSA News

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

February 2011

FGIS Matters...!

Randall Jones, Washington DC



Randall Jones

Export inspections continue an upward trend as total inspections are 9 percent ahead of last year and 19 percent ahead of the 5-year average. Wheat is a strong force behind the increase, up 2.7 million metric tons (mmt) over last year (up 43 percent). Corn inspections are 0.9 mmt ahead of last year but still lag the 5-year average by 2.16 mmt. Soybean exports have slowed but remain 0.3 mmt over last year, while sorghum exports are similar to last year.

New Orleans continues to see the largest increase in volume, up 4.0 mmt or 23 percent above last year at this time. The vast majority of this boost has come from soybeans, which alone account for 2.1 mmt of the increase. The Field Operations and Support Staff, and the League City, Olympia, New Orleans, and Toledo field offices have handled large increases in wheat, up 0.3 mmt (130 percent), 1.5 mmt (89 percent), 0.5 mmt (41 percent), 0.4 mmt (48 percent), and 0.3 mmt (62 percent) from a year ago. Nearly all of League City's increase has been from wheat. Cedar Rapids' volume has increased 0.2 mmt (26 percent) over last year, largely due to increased corn inspections.

In March, FGIS managers will meet in New Orleans to discuss a number of issues relating to program operations. We will also meet the first class of students from the Federal Career Intern Program, who are participating in a 2-year developmental program. We are committed to providing the interns with a very intensive and thorough training experience that will give them the necessary skills to be the next generation of FGIS leaders. Thank you to field office manager **Ron Metz** for his instrumental work in planning, developing, and implementing the program.

We continue to operate under a Continuing Resolution (CR) on the appropriated budget side at least through March 4, 2011. The current CR provides funding similar to the 2010 level. We also continue to operate under the 2010 budget obligation cap for user-fees. While the Department continues to try to increase the cap through the budget process with Congress, we cannot be certain of the outcome of our efforts. With this in mind, we must continue to operate efficiently with special attention to maintaining costs at levels similar to 2010.

Our reorganization continues as we work with Management and Budget Services to effect the necessary administrative changes. It is our goal to implement these changes in the few weeks.

Keep up the good work and stay safe!

Names in the News

PERSONNEL

Jekeia Robinson is the newest auditor in the Midwestern Regional Office (MRO). **Jekeia** hails from Peoria, IL, and attended Lincoln University of Missouri. During the summer of 2010, she was an intern with USDA's Rural Development, working on community water and waste programs. She graduated in December from Lincoln University with a BS degree in Accounting.

RETIREMENTS



Ed Durgin, manager of the Portland Field Office, will retire on February 28, 2011. For the first 10 years of his life, **Ed** lived in Ketchikan, a small fishing and lumbering community in Alaska's panhandle. He then moved to Centralia, WA. He received an Associates of Arts degree from Centralia College, and then a Bachelor of Arts degree in anthropology from Washington State University (WSU). A full-ride traineeship then took **Ed** to Eugene, OR, where he earned a Master of Arts and then Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of Oregon. **Ed** was introduced to

grain inspection in 1966 when a friend got a summer job with the Washington State Department of Agriculture's Grain Division, in Longview, WA. He was looking for someone to share the commute, and asked if **Ed** might be interested in working there too. For three summers, **Ed** worked as the railcar sampler (all boxcars at the time) and Woodside sampler. At the time, opportunities for full-time summer employment were scarce in the area, and he felt fortunate for the opportunity to work summers as he attended WSU. Indeed, **Ed** graduated from WSU debt-free - was the pay he received really that good, or was the cost of attending college much lower then? In 1975, after completing work on a research project in one of Portland's suburbs, **Ed** found himself seeking employment. While the economy was stagnant, grain exports were booming in the Pacific Northwest, and he applied for a job with the

Oregon Department of Agriculture's (ODA) Grain Division. He worked for ODA until 1978, when FGIS assumed responsibilities for grain inspection in Oregon. **Ed** began his FGIS career as an agricultural commodity technician and spent his first day as a weigher on the scale floor at the LDC elevator in Portland. For the next 21 years, **Ed** remained in the Portland Field Office. (He briefly moved to the Seattle Regional Office in 1989 as a grain marketing specialist, but returned to Portland when that office closed.) In 1999, he transferred to the Office of International Affairs (OIA) in Washington, DC, where he worked as a grain marketing specialist until 2009, when he transferred back to Portland as the field office manager. Throughout his career, **Ed** was a continual "volunteer." He participated on details with the Compliance Division, traveled internationally for FGIS, took part in training and leadership opportunities, worked on various committees, and served as a trainer/facilitator for the Excellence through Continuous Improvement program. **Ed** says that each of these experiences and opportunities presented new challenges and provided opportunities to meet and work with FGIS colleagues outside Portland. He has appreciated each and every opportunity.

*Continued, See Names
on page 3.*

Names, from page 2.

The highlights of **Ed**'s career, however, have been the opportunities to travel and work internationally with our customers and USDA colleagues in the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS). **Ed** represented FGIS in 20 different countries and spent two long-term assignments in Asia. He has a true passion for traveling and working internationally (he believes it is part of his DNA!) and has always appreciated opportunities to meet and work with our international customers. These international trips have had their side benefits as well. **Ed** notes that he has walked twice on the Great Wall in China, taken a private tour through the Kremlin in Moscow, and enjoyed spending time in a city park in Vietnam talking to young people who wanted to practice speaking English. **Ed**'s retirement on February 28, 2011, marks 33 years of employment with FGIS. And it is interesting that as he retires, a new export elevator is under construction in Longview, WA, where it all began for him some four and a half decades ago. **Ed** says that he will miss the numerous colleagues he has had the pleasure to meet and work with during his career. But he notes that he will retire with a feeling of satisfaction knowing that our solid international reputation is well-deserved. What's on the horizon for **Ed**? He plans to enjoy a leisurely cup of coffee with the paper in the morning, pursue volunteer opportunities in his church and community, "putter around" his yard, exercise more, and travel more, both domestically and internationally (trips to Alaska and Italy are currently in the works). **Ed** wishes his best to all and encourages us to "keep up the good work."

Mark Leppert, physical scientist in charge of the NIRT Protein Group, retired on January 28, 2011, after more than 31 years with the FGIS Technical Center. After obtaining his BA in Physics from Park College, **Mark** began his Federal career in 1978 as a physical scientist technician. After being RIFed in the early 1980s, he returned to FGIS, advancing to an electronics technician position in 1983. **Mark** spent much of his career working on research and development projects. He helped with projects to develop, evaluate, calibrate, and maintain equipment such as the Single Kernel Hardness Tester, GrainCheck imaging system for rice brokens, and pulsed NMR instrumentation for measuring sunflower oil. In 2004, **Mark** was promoted to project leader for the NIRT protein group. Since some of his earliest work was with standardizing Neotec protein analyzers, this seemed to bring his career full circle. **Mark**'s innovative solutions to improve the effectiveness of quality control systems, his interpersonal skills in working with a variety of people, his excellent leadership of the NIRT group, and his calm demeanor will be greatly missed.

Building Beyond

Ron Metz, Cedar Rapids

The Federal Grain Inspection Service welcomes its first class of agricultural commodity grader (ACG) trainees hired under the Federal Career Intern Program (FCIP).

FCIP, also known as Presidential Executive Order 13162, is designed to help agencies recruit and attract exceptional individuals into a variety of government occupations. FGIS' class of 18 interns began working on pay period one of 2011. The 2-year training program known as *Building Beyond* is designed to cover all FGIS activities and competencies associated with the ACG 1980 series. Interns will travel to different field offices for developmental assignments and training.

Please welcome the members of this class of future leaders! Their success helps to ensure our success in *Building Beyond*.

Julian Biley, League City
Britney Brown, League City
Ronald Bundy, Toledo
Melody Butler, Destrehan
Mavi Chambliss, Destrehan
George Duman, Destrehan
Jorge Gutierrez, League City
Brandon Harness, Destrehan
Lavon Jenkins, Destrehan
Alvin Kelly, Destrehan
Kendra Kline, Toledo
Vernett Knight, Destrehan
Marc Marullo, Destrehan
Daryl Perryman, League City
Melissa Shepherd, Destrehan
Sara Skrivanek, League City
Jorge Vazquez, League City
Abraham Washington, Destrehan

Regulatory Info

Tess Butler, Washington, DC

Federal Register

- Solicitation of Nominations for Members of the USDA Grain Inspection Advisory Committee, published January 3, 2011
- Designation of Minot Grain Inspection, Inc. to Provide Official Class X Weighing Services, published January 4, 2011
- Cancellation of Lewiston Grain Inspection Service, Inc. Designation; Opportunity for Designation in the Lewiston, ID Area, published January 4, 2011
- Opportunity for Designation in the State of Georgia and State of Montana Areas; Request for Comments on the Official Agencies Servicing These Areas, published January 4, 2011
- Designation for the Columbus, OH, Dallas, TX, and Decatur, IN, Areas, published January 4, 2011
- Required Scale Tests, published January 20, 2011

Issuances

Terri Henry, Washington, DC

- Issuance Change No. 28 to the Weighing Handbook, Chapter 3, dated December 27, 2010
- FGIS Directive 9180.17, Inspection of Export Wheat Lots for Canada Thistle Seed, dated January 4, 2011
- FGIS Program Notice 11-04, Wilsonart D456-60 "Café Crème" Laminate Work Surface, dated January 18, 2011

Reminder: Mandatory Training

*Caroline Thorpe,
Washington, DC*

- **USDA No FEAR Act Training 2010 (Full).** Due February 28, 2011, for all USDA employees who have NOT taken full training. This is automatically assigned to those who have never taken the full course.
- **Records Management Training.** Due April 15, 2011, for all GIPSA employees.
- **CY2011 Ethics.** The following mandatory courses will be added to your "To Do" list in AgLearn on February 1, 2011.
 - * Ethics: Conflicting Interests
 - * Ethics: Invitations from Outside Entities
 - * Ethics: Gifts from Outside SourcesThis training is due by June 30, 2011, for confidential filers and AD 1202s; and December 31, 2011, for all other employees.

Oh, Canada!

Tony Goodeman and Kendra Kline, Toledo

FGIS provides service in Canada to facilitate the marketing of U.S. grain exported from Canadian ports. In January 2010, the Canadian Grain Commission ended an agreement under which they helped FGIS provide service to customers in Canada. This presented a significant challenge for FGIS – not only to equip and staff six new export elevators, but to do so in the French-speaking province of Quebec. Due to its proximity to the St. Lawrence Seaway, the Toledo Field Office took the lead on the project. To better grasp the scope of the work, FGIS senior leadership met with Canadian grain exporters and stakeholders in January and June 2010. During these meetings, FGIS established a protocol for customers to follow when requesting service that would allow personnel sufficient time to travel, transport necessary equipment, and get country clearance. In 2010, Toledo Field Office staff inspected approximately 35 ships on the St. Lawrence Seaway in Canada. Inspections on these ships ranged from phytosanitary inspections or stowage exams to full inspections of 50,000-metric-ton lots under the CuSum loading program.

This success story was not without its challenges. Toledo Field Office personnel spent rotating 1- to 3-week details working in Canada with little or no notice to cover a constantly changing workload. A typical week might include a combination of flying and driving, working long hours in several different locations along the Seaway, and working outside in notoriously harsh Canadian winter weather.

FGIS' flexibility and professionalism in Canada recently drew the praise of **American Consul General Lee McClenny**, who was onsite in Montreal in January 2011 to observe FGIS inspection activity: FGIS inspectors “were very helpful and accommodating to me, and in their interaction with Canadian colleagues and contacts they were excellent professional ambassadors of your organization, our government, and our nation... ..it was fascinating to get to see the lengths to which our government goes to make sure that American grain and agricultural products continue to enjoy the excellent reputation that they do.”

The efforts among different divisions in FGIS, the hard work of FGIS employees, and collaboration with the State Department contributed to a successful shipping season on the St. Lawrence.



In Appreciation

Sharon Lathrop, Kansas City

The Kansas City Crops Contest is an annual event focused on knowledge of agronomy in three areas: plant and seed identification, grain grading, and seed analysis. Multiple universities that offer agronomy programs participate in the contests. In these contests, participants are required to identify 200 different plant or seed samples of crops and weeds; grade eight different samples of grain according to Federal Grain Inspection Service standards; and analyze ten seed samples to determine whether they contain impurities, and if so, what contaminants exist.

The Technical Services Division (TSD) participates in the program each year by creating the test samples of grain the students must grade. In addition, the members of the Board of Appeals and Review evaluate students' results and provide an educational tour of GIPSA's National Grain Center in Kansas City, MO.

This year's event was sponsored by the Kansas City Board of Trade, CHS Foundation, the American Society of Agronomy, the Crop Science Society of America, American Royal, Pioneer Hi-Bred International, the South Dakota Crop Improvement Association, and the Association of Official Seed Analysts. To the right is a letter of thanks for GIPSA's participation in the 2010 contest from the winning Kansas State University Crops Team.

December 13, 2010

Sharon Lathrop, Assistant to the Director
USDA, GIPSA, Technical Services Division
10383 N. Ambassador Hills Blvd.
PO Box 20285
Kansas City, MO 64153-1394

Dear Ms. Lathrop:

The Kansas State University Crops Team wishes to thank you and GIPSA for your support of the 2010 Kansas City Collegiate Crops Contest held in November. We were very fortunate to finish as the first place team in the contest this year, and we learned so much about grain grading and the work of the Federal Grain Inspection Service by participating.

We enjoyed the very informative tour of your laboratories at the Technical Services Division on the day before the contest. Thanks for making all of the arrangements, and please extend our thanks to all of your staff who helped with the tours.

The crops team has provided us an opportunity that will be a highlight of our college experience at Kansas State. By participating, we were able to meet fellow students from across the country who are also preparing for careers in the agricultural industry. Thank you and GIPSA for investing your time and resources in us. Have a great holiday season.

Sincerely,

The 2010 Kansas State University Crops Team



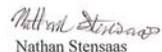
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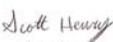
Ben Meyer



Nathan Stensaas



Jessie Zimmerman



Scott Henry



Dr. Kevin Donnelly
Team Coach



Lauren Lang



Levi Larkins

Kansas State University
Agricultural Experiment
Station and Cooperative
Extension Service

**"Knowledge
for Life"**

Employee Assistance Program

Call for confidential help.

1-800-222-0364

Veterans' Programs

*Dawn Cowan,
Washington, DC*

GIPSA's Civil Rights Staff administers various veterans' employment programs. As GIPSA's Veterans' Employment Program Office coordinators, **Rita Bhanot** and I promote veteran recruitment, monitor and report progress, and work with military Transition Assistance Programs, the Veterans' Administration, the Department of Defense (DOD), and veterans' service organizations. Some key veterans' employment programs are:

Operation Warfighter.

This DOD program provides wounded, ill, and injured ser-

vice members – including active duty, National Guard, and Reserve personnel – with meaningful activity outside of the hospital environment that positively impacts wellness and offers formal means of transitioning to returning to duty or entering the civilian workforce. Participants bring considerable civilian work experience plus their military backgrounds. Salaries are paid by the military. Participants enjoy a great opportunity to explore employment interests, develop job skills, build a resume, and gain valuable work experience.

Military Spouse Internship Program. This DOD initiative acquaints Federal agencies with the skills and talents of military spouses by providing first-year salary, benefits, and training costs for eligible military spouses hired into permanent Federal positions with career advancement. Only spouses married to active duty members of the Armed Forces are eligible to participate in this program. Military spouses bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to a workplace. They are adaptable and well organized, and have a deep sense of duty and commitment to public service. The goal of this pilot is to place spouses in occupations that are common across the government; thus, if the spouse has to leave our employ, their skills can be used elsewhere in the Federal government. Candidates can be found through the normal recruitment process using USAJOBS and with the help of DOD.

For more information on these or other veteran's programs, please contact **Rita Bhanot** at rita.bhanot@usda.gov or 202-720-9528, or me at dawn.m.cowan@usda.gov or 202-720-0961.

NOFO Food Drive 2010

Melba Babin, New Orleans

GIPSA employees in the New Orleans Field Office (NOFO) and Areas 1, 2, and 3 held another successful activity for charity – a 2010 Thanksgiving Food Drive. NOFO employees donated 780 pounds of food items to The Second Harvest Food Bank, which provides food for individuals in the greater New Orleans area and Acadian parishes. This amount exceeded our 2009 donation. Everyone should be proud of this accomplishment. Thanks to all who gave generously and provided hope for the less fortunate. A special thanks to the employees who collected, boxed, and transported all of the food donations that were delivered to the food bank.



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

For Your Health

Mavis Rogers, Washington, DC



Finding better ways to respond to stress and pressure will help protect your health. Stress is your body's response to change and it is a very individual thing. A situation one person finds stressful may not bother someone else. For example, one person may be tense when driving; another may find driving relaxing. Something that causes fear in some people, such as rock climbing, may be fun for others. No single thing is "bad" or "stressful" because everyone is different. And, not all stress is bad. Watching a close football game can be stressful, but can be fun too. Life would be dull without some stress. The key is to manage stress properly because unhealthy responses to it may lead to health problems in some people.

How does stress make you feel?

- ☹ It can make you feel angry, afraid, excited, or helpless.
- ☹ It can make it hard to sleep.
- ☹ It can give you aches in your head, neck, jaw, and back.
- ☹ It can lead to habits like smoking, drinking, overeating, or drug abuse.
- ☹ You may not even feel it at all, even though your body suffers from it.

Coping with Stress. Outside events (like problems with your boss, preparing to move, or worrying about a child's wedding) can be upsetting. Remember, it is not the outside force, rather, how you react to it inside, that is important. You cannot control all outside events in your life, but you can change how you handle them emotionally and psychologically. Here are some good ways to cope.

- ☺ Take 15 to 20 minutes a day to sit quietly, breathe deeply, and picture something beautiful or calm.
- ☺ Try to learn to accept things you cannot change. You do not have to solve all of life's problems. Talk out your troubles and look for the good instead of the bad in situations.
- ☺ Engage in physical activity regularly. Do what you enjoy – walk, swim, ride a bike, or jog to get your big muscles going. Letting go of the tension in your body will help you feel better.
- ☺ Limit alcohol, don't overeat, and don't smoke.

How can I live a more relaxed life?

- ☺ Think ahead about what may upset you and avoid what you can. For example, spend less time with people who bother you or avoid driving in rush-hour traffic.
- ☺ Think about problems and try to solve them. You could talk to your boss about difficulties at work, talk with your neighbor if his dog bothers you, or get help when you have too much to do.
- ☺ Change how you respond to difficult situations. Be positive, not negative.
- ☺ Learn to say "no." Don't promise too much.
- ☺ Give yourself enough time to get things done.

More Information. Talk to your doctor, nurse, or other health-care professionals. If you have heart disease or have had a stroke, members of your family also may be at higher risk. It is very important for them to make changes now to lower their risk. Call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721) or visit americanheart.org to learn more about heart disease. For information on stroke, call 1-888-4 Stroke (1-888-478-7653) or visit StrokeAssociation.org.

Courtesy: American Heart Association and American Stroke Association

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, 2011.

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