



GIPSA News

A newsletter for the employees of the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration

April 2005

Vision to Reality – Centralizing Monitoring

Dave Shipman, Washington, DC

In the 21st century, there will continue to be a need for grades, standards, and an impartial system to apply them. However, the structure of the grades, the definition of the standards, and the makeup of the impartial system will change in response to technology, market needs, and governmentwide initiatives... which are mandating that government does more with less. So, while ...GIPSA.. will still have a job to do, we will look and operate differently than we do today.

These words were written more than 3 years ago in a paper called "Vision 2002." The paper outlined a vision of what our organization would have to look like in the new millennium to remain a viable and valued part of American agriculture. Three years after publishing that paper, we are seeing many of the concepts in it coming to fruition. FGIS has long considered the benefits of centralizing our monitoring functions. Establishing a central monitoring laboratory (CML) is a key component to providing cost-effective, consistent inspection results nationwide. The technology has not been available to implement this concept while ensuring the accuracy and integrity of the official inspection system - until now.

Today, FGIS' domestic field offices perform various functions — appeal inspections, processed and

graded commodity inspections, grading monitoring samples, checktesting equipment, and supervising official agencies. Over the past decade, we've reduced the number of field offices to improve the overall efficiency and cost-effectiveness of operations, without compromising the integrity of the official inspection system. This streamlining process was supported by the introduction of an enhanced QA/QC program that moved us away from a mainframe-driven system that provided historical quality data at best to a PC-based system that provides immediate access to enhanced quality data and greater discretion in carrying out front-line duties within established policy. In addition to upgrading the QA/QC program, FGIS introduced new technology such as the NIRT protein instrument, the GAC 2100 moisture meter, and the CuSum

software program, all of which have increased accuracy and the overall service provided by the official inspection system and permitted the centralized performance verification of key instrumentation, such as the moisture and protein. In brief, technology allowed the Agency to alter policies and procedures to better meet the needs of a changing marketplace.

Today's technology offers even greater opportunity to change our business practices and improve service delivery. Centralizing inspection equipment standardization and processing monitoring samples will better serve the needs of the new emerging market.

*Continued, see **Centralization**
on page 3.*

Names in the News

East Meets West in GIPSA

Henry Wang, Washington, DC

PERSONNEL

Leslie Frazer is the new secretary to the Deputy Administrator, PS&P.

Robert Lijewski is the new chief of the Policies and Procedures Branch, Field Management Division.

AWARDS

Al Rupert and Cary Brown, Field Management Division, Chicago, received performance awards for their outstanding leadership and customer service to GIPSA's weighing program which has resulted in the Agency saving money through labor repairs and for special services to the industry.

20-YEAR SERVICE AWARDS

Margaret Cummings, Des Moines
 Patricia Donohue-Galvin,
 Washington, DC
 Mary McCoy, Washington, DC
 Carol Remmers, Washington, DC

30-YEAR SERVICE AWARDS

Anne Bullard, New Orleans
 Russell Frank, New Orleans
 Richard McCaw, Portland
 Kenton McDunnah, Cedar Rapids
 James Qualls, Jonesboro
 Thomas Reagan, Beaumont
 Harry Schaaf, Denver
 Janet Walton, New Orleans

I am a statistician and economist with Economic and Statistical Support, P&SP, and a good example of the broad cultural diversity that GIPSA's workforce exhibits. A native of China, I came to the United States in 1987, and studied at the University of Pennsylvania. After I received my Ph.D., I worked on market analysis of energy demand and supply, forecasting, and survey design of the telecommunication industry in the private sector. In early 1999, I became a U.S. citizen and later joined P&SP. Since then, my job has focused on statistical analysis, P&SP statistical report, and a statistical model for monitoring regional fed cattle price variation.

When I came to this country to study about 18 years ago, I encountered several difficulties including culture, language, educational environment, and social system. Everything was new and unknown to me. Interestingly, after more than a decade, when I went back to China, I found everything in China had become unfamiliar: my home town (Beijing), the way people were thinking and talking, the rules of business in daily life, and even the language (many newly created words). China has had a rapid economic development and a remarkable economic change. For instance, Beijing has torn down its old city and built an entirely new city over the past 15 years. Many streets and roads no longer exist after alterations to the city's landscape. The city's development will remain in process, especially before the 2008 Olympic. I believe that China's economic advances have brought people a better living standard and its emerging market economy will change China ideologically and politically.

I plan to visit China late this year. I know that I will see even more changes since my last visit and am excited about the trip.

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Centralization, from page 1.

When we speak of centralizing monitoring, we do not envision simply moving the monitoring processes we use today to a central location. We envision completely re-engineering the monitoring process by using new technology.

By 2009, we plan to consolidate resources to monitor the performance of the official inspection system through a centralized organization located at an FGIS “center of excellence” in Kansas City, Missouri. Collocated at our current Technical Center, the center will be home to personnel from all FGIS divisions. The Technical Services Division will provide technical guidance for grading, equipment testing, and quality control. Field Management Division will provide certification and policy and procedure guidance to official service providers via a “helpdesk.” The Compliance Division will station satellite compliance officers at the center.

Centralization will not result in an immediate departure of FGIS employees from the domestic market. Functions and related staffing will be migrated to the Kansas City center over the next 3 years as space is renovated and information technology systems are deployed. A limited FGIS staff will remain located in key service areas even after centralization is completed to ensure a smooth transition and continued effective operations.

Centralization will reduce offices and staff years in FGIS’ domestic program. Every effort, however, will be made to dovetail it with the attrition (retirement eligibility) across FGIS. By 2009, 64 percent of the entire FGIS workforce will be eligible for

retirement. Anticipated attrition will most severely impact staffing levels in FGIS’ two largest job classification groups: agricultural commodity graders and agricultural commodity technicians. In 2006, 35 percent of the ACGs and 19 percent of the ACTs will be eligible for retirement. By 2009, 73 percent of ACGs and 20 percent of ACTs will be eligible.

Even with attrition, centralization will, unfortunately, involve relocations and difficult choices for some of our dedicated employees in domestic field offices. Some will retire, some may decide to resign, and, hopefully, most will embrace this change as an opportunity to enhance their careers and make a difference by improving the overall performance of the official inspection system. Centralizing monitoring functions is predicted to reduce interior field office staffing by 22 individuals and increase staffing at the “center of excellence” by 10 individuals. We plan to fill these positions through reassignments and promotions. Starting this year, we are not replacing employees departing from the domestic program due to retirements or other reasons. This will help minimize the impact of centralization on our remaining employees, and ensure they are afforded the new opportunities that centralization will bring.

In the 2002 paper, our vision was to evolve, adapt, and improve services delivered to American agriculture. Our vision is becoming a reality. But, change is always difficult and I can appreciate the uncertainty you may feel. However, I believe working together we can make this change happen and minimize the impact on employees and their families.

While my comments today are focused on the changes planned for our domestic operations, I’d also like to update you on what’s happening in the export market. As I mentioned in the November 2004 *GIPSA News*, a segment of the grain industry is using our legislative reauthorization process to advocate a change in how we deliver mandatory export grain inspection services. In brief, they would like the option of using private companies for inspection and weighing services at export with direct federal oversight. The Department has sent proposed legislation to Congress requesting a 10-year reauthorization of the U.S. Grain Standards Act. No change to the current Federal system was proposed. However, we do expect legislation to be introduced by others to amend the Act to permit the use of private entities. Consequently, the issue of how best to provide export inspection service in the future will be discussed during the reauthorization process. Our objective is to ensure such discussions are based on facts.

These two issues are of great importance to all of us in FGIS. I will keep you updated on both in the coming months.

Earth Day



April 22, 2005

Travel Bits & Pieces

Peggy Smith, Washington, DC

eTravel Update. When purchasing tickets whether online or by phone through FedTraveler, please purchase your ticket at the time you make your reservations as long as you're purchasing the Federal YCA contract carrier fare.

By purchasing your ticket at the time your reservations are made, you will not run the risk of your ticket going up in price before you purchase the tickets. The Federal YCA fare enables you to cancel or change a flight up to the last minute without incurring any fees. Also, the Federal YCA fare guarantees you a seat even if the flight is full.

Your travel card is not charged with the purchase of the ticket until 3 days before your trip. You should always use the Federal YCA contract fare unless:

1. Space or a scheduled contract flight is not available in time to accomplish the purpose of your travel.
2. The flight schedule is inconsistent with agency policies with regard to scheduling travel during normal working hours.
3. A non-contract carrier offers a lower fare available to the general public.

More about Junk E-Mail

Carol Remmers, Washington, DC

Unsolicited commercial e-mail is known as "junk" e-mail and also, much to the distress of the Hormel Corporation, as "spam." Junk e-mail is spawned by foolish or unscrupulous people who send out thousands or even millions of identical messages to unwilling recipients. Junk e-mail clogs victims' in-baskets and wastes their time as they open these unwanted messages and realize they are junk. Junk may even push people's e-mail systems over server limits if they are not picking up their messages regularly. In those instances, additional *wanted* e-mail may bounce because the mail-box is full.

Most junk e-mail uses forged headers -- the senders know they are doing something wrong and deliberately put misleading information in the FROM and REPLY fields to avoid receiving angry responses from victims of their rudeness. Forging e-mail headers is illegal in Massachusetts, Virginia, and Washington State. In one case, a clueless college student sent out junk e-mail messages and followed the instructions in his spam kit by putting a made-up REPLY address using "@flowers.com" without checking to see if there really was such a domain. The owner of this reputable floral delivery service, Tracy LaQuey Parker, was none too pleased when her system was flooded with over 5,000 bounce messages and angry letters from customers. She sued the student and was awarded over \$18,000 in damages.

- Don't buy products or services from anyone who has sent you junk e-mail. If they are unprofessional or stupid enough to use such methods of advertising, they don't deserve your business or your trust.
- Don't assume that the FROM address is correct, because often it is either non-existent or, worse, fraudulently misrepresents the origin by pointing to a legitimate business that is completely innocent of wrong-doing. And *never* bombard the owner of the FROM address with multiple copies (or even one copy) of abusive e-mail (a practice known as *mail-bombing*), since you will likely be reaching the wrong target.
- **Never** respond to the address listed for removal from a junk e-mail list unless you know the organization that sent the message. Since bounces (returned e-mail due to bad addresses) never reach them and there is no cost for sending out addresses to unwilling people, these operators really don't care how you feel about the junk they send. AND, they use the REMOVE function primarily to harvest correct e-mail addresses so they can sell them to someone else.
- Don't visit the URLs listed in junk e-mail messages. Some of them are deliberately mislabeled and may bring you to offensive Web sites.
- Last, in case the message hasn't been clear, do not send junk e-mail yourself.

Here are some useful sites about junk e-mail: ChooseYourMail -- www.chooseyourmail.com/; Coalition Against Unsolicited Commercial Email -- www.cauce.org/; "Fight Spam on the Internet" -- <http://spam.abuse.net/>; JunkEmail.org -- www.junkemail.org/; JunkBusters www.junkbusters.com/; Spam luncheon-meat fan club www.spam.com/; and Tips For Consumers: What You Should Do About Unsolicited Commercial E-mail" (1998) from the Better Business Bureau -- www.bbb.org/library/email.asp.

For Your Health

Mavis Rogers, Washington, DC

Usually, office work does not require lifting large or especially heavy objects. However, office workers need to practice safe lifting techniques. Lifting small, light loads (e.g., stacks of files, boxes of computer paper, books) can cause injury to back, neck, and shoulders when lifting is done incorrectly. Most back injuries result from using improper lifting techniques and ignoring safety precautions. If you think that lifting an object is beyond your ability, contact your supervisor or ask another employee to assist you.

To lift safely in the office, you should:

- Lift with your legs, not your back. Your leg muscles are larger and better positioned over the hips and knees to lift safely.
- Always position your hips and feet toward the object you are lifting or moving. Do not twist.
- Maintain the natural curves of the neck, upper back, and lower back while lifting, moving, and sitting.
- Keep objects close to your body to reduce strain on your spine.
- Push rather than pull. Pushing places your legs in a natural position to do the work, while pulling forces your back into a forward, bent position.
- Squat and stand whenever you have to retrieve something from the floor. Bending from a seated position and then sitting up places tremendous strain on your back. Also, your chair may be unstable and slip from under you. Always stand and move your chair out of the way.

To avoid back injury, you should:

- Avoid twisting when you lift a load.
- Rotate your tasks, so that periods of standing alternate with periods of moving or sitting.
- Ask for stools or footrests for stationary jobs.
- Store materials at knee level and not on the floor
- Store materials on shallow shelves to avoid reaching forward to lift an object.
- Avoid carrying heavy objects a long distance. Store them close at hand or use a hand truck or cart to transport them.

Courtesy Environment, Health & Safety Magazine

Take Our
Daughters
and Sons
to Work Day



April 28, 2005

P&SP Responds to Avian Influenza Outbreak

Kevin Smith, Atlanta

P&SP continues to monitor avian influenza (AI) in the United States and around the world prepare for possible changes in business conditions that could result in violations of the Packers and Stockyards Act. AI is an infectious disease of birds caused by type A strains of the influenza virus. The infection causes a wide spectrum of symptoms in birds, ranging from mild illness to a highly contagious and rapidly fatal disease, resulting in severe epidemics.

Periodic AI outbreaks have occurred in the United States. Domestic outbreaks can have serious consequences for poultry growers, integrators, and the entire industry in the areas affected by the outbreak. Among the consequences are depopulation of birds in the impacted area, an inability of integrators to sell in important markets, and the costs of dead bird disposal. A particularly severe AI outbreak that was largely confined to Pennsylvania in 1983-1984 resulted in the destruction of more than 17 million birds at a cost of nearly \$65 million. Another outbreak in Virginia in 2002 cost an estimated \$140 million to eradicate. Recent AI outbreaks in Asia have crossed the species barrier to humans and have resulted in a number of human deaths in Thailand, Vietnam, and Cambodia.

Continued, see Avian Influenza on page 7.

Fair Credit Reporting Act

Ray Minks, Washington, DC

P&SP is responsible for enforcing and administering the Packers and Stockyards Act and its regulations. In addition, P&SP shares enforcement responsibilities with other federal agencies for several consumer protection laws.

The Truth in Lending Act ensures lenders properly disclose credit terms to consumers. This allows consumers to make informed choices on the use of credit.

The Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) promotes the accuracy, fairness and privacy of information collected and maintained by consumer reporting agencies. Consumers are given certain rights regarding the collection and use of their credit information. A Federal Trade Commission (FTC) publication entitled "A Summary of Your Rights under the Fair Credit Reporting Act" (<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/pubs/credit/fcrasummary.pdf>), briefly describes consumers' rights under the FCRA and lists the enforcement responsibilities of federal agencies by types of business. GIPSA is listed for "Activities subject to the Packers and Stockyards Act, 1921".

The Equal Credit Opportunity Act ensures that all consumers have an equal opportunity to obtain credit. Creditors are prohibited from unlawful discrimination when granting credit, and consumers are granted certain rights. Anyone involved in granting credit is covered by the law.

The Fair Debt Collection Practices Act (FDCPA) requires debt collectors to treat debtors fairly, and prohibits certain methods of debt collection. Personal, family, and household debts are covered under the FDCPA. FTC's "Fair Debt Collection" publication (<http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/pubs/credit/fdc.pdf>) explains the legislation.

PS&P's enforcement responsibilities for the above legislation is limited to activities subject to the P&S Act. Other federal agencies, usually the Federal Trade Commission, have more direct enforcement responsibilities. The FTC's consumer information web site, http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/edcams/credit/rules_acts.htm, provides additional information. The legislation may also be reviewed in the US Code, Title 15, Commerce and Trade, Chapter 41, Consumer Credit Protection.

What is P&SP's role in enforcement of these laws? If P&SP receives information that a subject individual or business may have violated any of these laws, we conduct an investigation and take appropriate action based on the findings. Since being delegated authority to enforce these consumer protection laws, P&SP has not received any actionable complaints. Consumers are aware that P&SP has some responsibility for consumer protection legislation; OPLS receives 40-50 letters a year from consumers under this legislation. So far, all of these letters have been referred to the FTC for follow up, since none involved activities subject to the P&S Act. P&SP also files a yearly report with the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System on activities under this legislation.

FGIS Proposes Changing OA Fees

On March 21, FGIS proposed changing the fees assessed to delegated States and designated official agencies authorized by the Agency to provide official inspection and weighing services to the U.S. grain industry

Currently, GIPSA charges supervision fees per service for an average cost of approximately 0.8 cent per metric ton of grain. These fees are charged by official agencies to their grain industry customers as part of their overall fee for inspection and weighing services. The proposed supervision fee is based on the weight of grain (metric tons) and will be 1.1 cents per metric ton. This increase is forecasted to minimally increase the total cost of inspection services to the grain industry.

The fee adjustment is necessary to collect sufficient revenue to cover the current and future cost of supervising the performance of the official agencies.

Comments on the proposal are due May 20, 2005.

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Field personnel, call...
1-800-222-0364

New Leader Program

Rosemary Mayne, Washington, DC

The disease has not been proven to be transmitted between humans, but a number of public health experts are concerned that this strain of the virus may mutate, so that it can be.

In 2004, there were AI outbreaks in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, Delaware, and Texas. P&SP organized the Avian Influenza Task Force (AITF) in the Atlanta regional office to help poultry growers and live poultry dealers handle adverse economic impacts after the outbreak and other catastrophic events. The AITF was comprised of **Elkin Parker** (chair), **Steve Dow**, **Mary Heisey**, **Enrique Ospina**, **John Rollins**, **Bob Schmidt**, and **Creig Stephens**.

In 2004, the AITF was renamed the Poultry Policy Task Force and changed its focus from diseases to poultry policy and regulatory issues. Initially, the task force focused on conducting surveillance of the poultry industry to identify potential actions that might lead live poultry dealers to violate the Act after epidemic disease outbreaks and other catastrophic events. In 2005, **Tim Hansen**, Office of Policy and Litigation Support, became leader of the Task Force.

To safeguard poultry growers from these kinds of potential violations, the task force proposed several policies and regulations to ensure proper enforcement of the Act. One suggested regulation is to require live poultry dealers to include language in grow-out contracts that discloses the methods of compensation after poultry growers and live poultry dealers experience catastrophic losses such as avian disease. Another document prepared by the AITF outlines a tracking system for livestock and poultry disease epidemics and other catastrophic events will guide P&SP through potential epidemic livestock and poultry diseases and other catastrophic losses.

In 2005, **Elkin Parker** organized a new AITF to focus exclusively on issues related to avian influenza and other avian diseases. The team is comprised of **Kevin Smith** (leader), **Steve Dow**, **Joe Moore**, and **Robert Schmidt**, Atlanta; and **Tim Hansen**, Washington, DC.

The AITF focuses on monitoring avian influenza and other avian diseases. The team is particularly interested in the possible impacts the avian influenza

On December 17, 2004, I was proud to witness the graduation of a GIPSA employee. **Denise Ruggles**, Cedar Rapids, graduated from the Graduate School, USDA New Leader Program 2004.

The New Leader Program (NLP) is designed to develop future public leaders through training and developmental opportunities. **Denise** commented, "The New Leader Program is a challenging, but rewarding program. I gained a better understanding of myself through the various tests and identified my strengths and the areas which I needed to improve or change. The bonus was the opportunity to network with other Federal employees. Now I have many new friends and resources throughout the world." **Denise's** graduation marked the end of 6 months during which she participated in all the components of the program and successfully completed all of the program requirements, while successfully juggling her job and family responsibilities. Kudos, **Denise!**

And for 2005.... GIPSA's participant in the NLP is **Larry Giles**, safety and occupational health specialist, New Orleans. NLP selection criteria included leadership potential and motivation to complete all requirements and fully participate in the program. **Larry** begins the 6-month program in March aiming to better understand Federal government operations and build self-confidence to achieve his goals. He, too, will learn more about himself through assessments and interaction and build a development plan. Through instructional sessions, interviews, and other course requirements, he will gain a better understanding of both GIPSA and the Federal government. **Larry** will be away from his current position for a total of 2 months over the 6-month period as he participates in the residential training sessions and developmental work assignments. **Larry** has many challenges ahead, and lots of great professional and personal growth opportunities.

virus has on growers and integrators resulting from AI outbreaks.

Currently the AITF is doing extensive research in preparing P&SP on how to react in an AI outbreak. In order to better assist P&SP, the task force is carefully monitoring press reports and staying in contact with the industry on a continuing basis to monitor AI outbreaks and future concerns. AITF is also collecting information from AI experts, State governments, and other USDA agencies to prepare AI response plans in case of an outbreak.

DC Celebrates Black History Month

Linda Alston, Washington, DC

GIPSA headquarters celebrated Black History Month with Major General George Bowman.

MG Bowman became a brigadier general in 1998; the first African American to become Commanding General, 311th Theater Signal Command in 1999; and Major General in 2000. He has received many awards including the Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal W/4th OLC, Army Commendation Medal W/2d OLC, Army Achievement Medal, and Army Superior Unit Award.

GIPSA "climbed the ladder" with MG Bowman as he presented a brief history of the roles of Blacks in the military. He told some of the history of 90 Buffalo Soldiers who fought against 800 Cheyenne warriors with the loss of only 3 men. He spoke about the entire Black 761st Tank Battalion, under General George S. Patton, who many times led Patton's army into battle.

Other "rungs on the ladder" included the Tuskegee Airman, African American pilots from Tuskegee Institute; the Red Ball Express, a convoy established in 1944 that transported approximately 20,000 tons of fuel and ordinance to Allied forces moving through Europe; and the American Blacks, who fought under the French flag and received the highest medal the French could give.

MG Bowman's "climb up the ladder" was enlightening, educational, and a brief and informative look into the roles and responsibilities of Blacks in the military.

Regulatory Info

Tess Butler, Washington, DC

Federal Register Publications

- Opportunity for Designation in the Aberdeen (SD), Decatur (IL), Hastings (NE), McCrea (IA), Missouri, South Carolina, and Wisconsin Areas, and Request for Comments on the Official Agencies Serving These Areas – Published March 1, 2005
- Designation for the Owensboro (KY), Bloomington (IL), Iowa Falls (IA), Minnesota, Fargo (ND), Grand Forks (ND), and Plainview (TX) Areas – Published March 1, 2005
- Designation of Eastern Iowa To Provide Class X or Class Y Weighing Services – Published March 1, 2005
- Opportunity to Comment on the Applicants for the California Area – Published March 10, 2005
- Amendment to Certification of Nebraska's Central Filing System – Published March 10, 2005
- Fees Assessed by the Service – Published March 21, 2005
- United States Standards for Beans – Published March 21, 2005
- Designation for the Southwest Arizona Area – Published March 23, 2005

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GIPSA? Do you have questions?
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Civil Rights Hotline

P&SP at ASTM F-10 Meeting

Peter Jackson, Washington, DC

On March 16-17, 2005, P&SP's Carcass Evaluation Task Force participated in the annual meeting of the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) F-10 Committee, called Livestock, Meat & Poultry Evaluation Systems, in Philadelphia, PA. Other attendees included producers and manufacturers, as well as other government agencies and academia.

As part of P&SP's strategic goal to "ensure fair and competitive marketing for livestock, meat, and poultry to benefit American agriculture, P&SP formed a task force to participate in the ASTM. The Carcass Evaluation Task Force, formally the ASTM Task Force, is comprised of members from each of P&SP's regional offices and headquarters. The P&SP Carcass Evaluation Task Force is well represented on the International F-10 Committee, "Livestock, Meat & Poultry Evaluation Systems."

As members of the ASTM F-10 Committee and subcommittees, the task force helps develop new standards and revise existing ones for livestock, meat, and poultry evaluation systems. The task force's work is coordinated with other organizations and governmental entities with mutual interest.

Prior to the official start of the ASTM F-10 meeting, the P&SP Carcass Evaluation Task Force conducted an outreach meeting for weights and measures officials from Delaware, Maryland, and New Jersey. The meeting focused on encouraging their participation in the ASTM F-10 Committee meeting, and gaining support from State Weights & Measures Divisions for implementation of the Livestock, Meat, & Poultry Devices and Systems standards.

At the conclusion of the F-10 Committee meeting, P&SP employees **Jim Vanderwielen** and **John Edmond** were recognized for their past work done for the F-10 Committee. **Vanderwielen** was recognized for his leadership on a subcommittee and **Edmond** was recognized for serving as Chair of the F-10 Committee.

Participants included from headquarters were: **JoAnn Waterfield**, deputy administrator, **Brett Offutt**, OPLS director; **Gale Mason**, Trade Practices Branch chief; **Henry Wang**, ESS; and **Peter Jackson**, chair of P&SP Carcass Evaluation Task Force. Regional personnel in attendance were: **Jim Vanderwielen**, business manager; **Cary Ainsworth** and **Kevin Smith**, Atlanta; **Maggie Mills** and **Stacey Schofield**, Denver; and **Bryce Wilke**, **Becky Janssen**, and **Dewey Blatchford**, Des Moines.

Arbor Day

April 29, 2005

In the 1840s, pioneers arriving in the territory of Nebraska found a wide prairie. There were few trees to build houses, burn for fuel, or offer protection from sun or wind. Crops did not grow well in the dry earth. Sterling Morton was one of those pioneers. He and his wife planted trees immediately after arriving. Morton was a journalist, and later the editor of Nebraska's first newspaper. In his writings, he advocated planting trees on this vast barren plain. He became the secretary of the Nebraska Territory. In 1872, Morton proposed that Nebraska's citizens set aside April 10 as a day to plant trees, with prizes for communities and organizations that planted the most trees properly. The idea caught on. Nebraskans planted about 1 million trees on that first Arbor Day. Today, visitors would never guess that Nebraska was once a dusty prairie. In 1882, Nebraska declared April 22, Arbor Day (it was also Morton's birthday) Today, states celebrate Arbor Day on different days, based on the best tree-planting season. Hawaiians plant Arbor Day trees on the first Friday in November!

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 April 25, 2005!

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