



GIPSA News

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

April 2007

Status of OAS Action Team Recommendations

Dave Shipman

The FGIS Executive Management Team (EMT) met in January and March 2007. At the meetings, we addressed the recommendations of the FGIS OAS Supervision Action Team Report and the status of implementing a number of the recommendations. The EMT, and all FGIS employees, deeply appreciate the Team's efforts and dedication, and value their thoughtful recommendations. Below is a status report on management's decisions about, and the status of, each recommendation:

Open Forum Meetings. FGIS will hold open forum meetings in the spring, summer, and fall of 2007 to address employee questions and concerns. The FGIS Management Team will solicit employee questions and input about topics to be covered. Guest speakers will address specific issues, as appropriate. The Open Forum meetings may be expanded to include all GIPSA employees, depending on the subject matter of the meeting.

Monthly Staff Meetings. On February 15, 2007, I issued a memorandum to all FGIS managers strongly

encouraging all units to hold regularly scheduled staff meetings. The structure, attendance, and timing of such meetings will be determined on an office-by-office basis to meet work schedules, staffing, and other logistical requirements. All Division and Staff directors reported at the March management meeting that they were holding regularly scheduled staff meetings.

Reengineer inGIPSA Web Site. In January 2007, a Leadership Development Program team was charged with assessing and recommending new content for the inGIPSA website to make it the primary, one-stop communication tool for all GIPSA employees. The team, with input from employees, will deliver a content outline in May 2007. The management team's goal is to make inGIPSA the preferred way of communicating within FGIS. Worksite supervisors could have the site open and available to employees at all times without individuals logging in with specific email addresses. (See "Revitalizing inGIPSA" on page 3.)

Suggestion Boxes. In January 2007, suggestion boxes were placed in each GIPSA work location, and procedural guidance was sent to all managers. An article in the March 2007, issue of *GIPSA News*, the Agency newsletter, advertised the availability of the boxes as a new communication tool.

Open Forum Meeting on Performance Appraisals. Information on performance appraisals will be distributed to all supervisors and the topic will be covered in a future open forum meeting.

Supervisory Training on Performance Appraisals by Human Resources Specialist. Performance appraisal training will be scheduled for all FGIS managers and supervisors. Sessions will tentatively be held in New Orleans, Portland, League City, Kansas City, and Washington, DC.

*Continued, see
OAS Recommendations
on page 4.*

Names in the News

LEAVE DONATIONS

Gina Pankowski, secretary, Field Management Division, gave birth to a son on February 13, 2007. Her annual and sick leave have been exhausted due to her recovery from a C-section and caring for her newborn. Leave donations would be greatly appreciated to aid in the time needed to recover from the delivery and caring for the newborn. If you would like to donate either annual or restored annual leave to **Gina**, please complete form AD-1043 and either fax it or mail it (not both) to: USDA APHIS MRPBS HRD; Attn: LCT; Butler Square 5th Floor; 100 North 6th Street; Minneapolis, MN 55403; FAX: 612-370-2361. Form AD-1043 can be found on the web at: <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/forms/adforms.html>.

RETIREMENTS

Bill Strickland, officer in charge, Jonesboro Suboffice, retired on March 3, 2007, after 30 years of Federal service. **Bill** started his career in 1976 in the New Orleans field office. In 1978, he transferred to the Corpus Christi, Texas, Field Office, where he was promoted to shift supervisor in 1980. In 1984, Bill transferred to the Memphis, Tennessee, office as Officer in Charge. In 1994, **Bill** transferred to the Jonesboro, Arkansas, office, where he stayed until his retirement on March 3, 2007.

AWARDS

Ron Jenkins, chemist, and **Tandace Scholdberg** and **Daishia Burton**, physical scientists, Technical Service Division, each received a Spot Award for extraordinary effort in determining the identity of an unknown biotech event in rice seed.

CONDOLENCES

Archie E. Jones, 71, passed away on March 2, 2007. **Archie** was a veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps. He was an extremely effective shift supervisor and was well respected and liked by his employees and coworkers at the Corpus Christi, Texas, field office. **Archie** retired from FGIS in the late 1980s and moved to Shreveport, Louisiana, in the mid-1990s. He is survived by his wife of 47 years, **Susie Jones**.



Archie Jones

New Numbers for Toledo

The phone and fax numbers for the Toledo, Ohio, Field Office have changed. The new phone number is 419-893-3076 and the new fax number is 419-893-2861.

Kaye Burnep, regional Information Technology Staff support, can now be reached at 419-893-2984.

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Western Regional Office Places Auditor in Texas

The Western Regional Office (WRO) recently departed from traditional P&SP staffing practices by establishing a field auditor position in Waco, Texas. The P&SP management team approved the Texas position to place an auditor closer to the industry GIPSA regulates. The action supports the P&SP Business Plan objective to increase visibility to livestock producers and other livestock and poultry industry participants. The Texas auditor will work closely with four existing Texas resident agents. The Waco duty station will allow GIPSA to provide more timely responses to complex financial problems than could be obtained by flying an auditor from Denver.

Jerald Lenz reported for duty on March 19, 2007, and was immediately whisked off to training at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center. **Jerald** is not a stranger to GIPSA requirements. He comes to the Agency with 19 years of experience auditing grain elevators in Indiana. He will work from a home office similar to P&SP's resident agents, but will report to the WRO Financial Unit Supervisor and will not work an assigned geographic territory. He will be available to work on financial investigations wherever assigned.

We've all heard the expression, "Everything is bigger in Texas." Statistical data from the livestock industry supported this expression when the WRO supervisory team evaluated staffing needs and recommended the position be created. Texas is home to 5.3 million beef cows, 0.35 million dairy cows and 1.1 million sheep and lambs.* Thirty Texas meat packers slaughter 6 million head of cattle each year. The total includes 5 large fed steer and heifer plants which harvest 5.2 million fed steers and heifers annually and cow/bull plants which harvest the remaining 0.8 million head.** The poultry industry also maintains a significant presence in eastern Texas. GIPSA regulates 7 live poultry dealers that operate approximately 20 processing plants and feed mills.

The March 2007 list of GIPSA registered entities shows Texas ranchers market livestock through 160 auction markets registered to sell livestock on commission and to 365 registered livestock dealers and commission buyers. These registrants and packers create a significant workload for the Western Region. A March 2007 list of pending enforcement actions contained 26 Texas respondents. Nineteen of the 26 formal investigation reports alleged financial violations.

The WRO appreciates the opportunity to work with a remote site auditor. We look forward to the contribution an auditor stationed in Texas can make toward improving GIPSA's presence and the level of compliance with P&SP requirements.

* http://www.nass.usda.gov/quickstats/pulldata_US.jsp

** *Packers & Stockyards Statistical Report – 2005 Reporting Year*

Help Us Revitalize inGIPSA

*Joel Menking
and Margaret Cummings*

inGIPSA, our internal website, was developed more than 10 years ago to serve as an internal communication tool. Over the years, employees' needs, technology, and website requirements have changed. It is time to revitalize *inGIPSA* with the goal of making it the primary and most efficient communication tool for all employees.

We need your help! We're looking for your ideas for the content that a new and revitalized *inGIPSA* web site should have to make it a highly effective one-stop communication tool for all employees. *inGIPSA* should be home to all of the information you need to be connected, informed, and current on any and all the issues relating to your career, from personal information to GIPSA policy to executive communications.

What information would you like to see on our Agency's internal website – our one-stop GIPSA communication center? What needs to be eliminated? Added? How can we group the information so that you can easily find the information you need?

This is your webpage. We need your help. Contact Joel Menking at telephone 361-888-3461 or e-mail to Joel.L.Menking@usda.gov; or Margaret Cummings at telephone 816-891-0409 or via e-mail to Margaret.R.Cummings@usda.gov.

Please submit your comments by April 15, 2007.

Raise Performance Appraisals to Major Non-Compliance. The Compliance Division will continue to assess performance appraisals as part of compliance reviews, but the compliance officer will retain discretion in assessing the scope of the identified non-compliance.

Supervisors and Employees Work Together to Develop and Review IDPs During Performance Evaluations. I issued a memorandum in March 2007, to all FGIS managers, copying all employees, directing inclusion of IDP discussions during timely and meaningful performance evaluations.

Training Assistant at Each Work Site. The EMT concurred with a need for additional guidance at work sites, and is working to strengthen the role of shift supervisors to provide this function.

Establish Specialized Enhancement Program (SEP) to Replace Excel Program. The EMT approved this recommendation and is gathering training program guidelines from the New Orleans Field Office. The documentation will be shared with all field managers, who will then develop programs tailored to meet their specific training, staffing, and scheduling needs.

These recommendations are helping to improve our organization for all FGIS employees.

Federal Register Publications

- Cancellation of Minnesota's Delegation – Published March 2, 2007
- Opportunity to Comment on the Applicants for the Savage (MN) Area – Published March 2, 2007
- Calculating Interest on Reparation Awards Under the Packers and Stockyards Act – Published March 7, 2007
- Designation for the Champaign (IL), Detroit (MI), Davenport (IA), Enid (OK), Keokuk (IA), Michigan (MI), Memphis (TN), and Omaha (NE) Areas – Published March 7, 2007
- Opportunity for Designation in Amarillo (TX), Cairo (IL), Corpus Christi (TX), Louisiana, North Carolina, and Belmond (IA) Areas, and Request for Comments on the Official Agencies Serving These Areas – Published March 7, 2007

Issuances

Terri Henry, Washington, D.C.

- GIPSA Policy Memorandum Reference No. 213, "Network Disk Space Quotas," dated March 8, 2007

Opportunity for USDA Details to Iraq

USDA is seeking applications from qualified employees for detail assignments in Iraq as agricultural advisors on Provincial Reconstruction Teams. Employees with prior experience in agricultural extension are particularly encouraged to apply. Assignments will be for 12-month deployments starting as early as July 2007. Selected applicants will receive a package of allowance and differentials on top of salary that currently equal 95 percent of base salary. While the general level of qualification is GS-11, consideration will be given to employees currently at the GS-9 level, if the home Agency supports a temporary promotion to the GS-11 level during the detail assignment. GIPSA will support such a temporary promotion for any GS-9 applicant selected. The application closing date has been changed from March 30, 2007 to April 20, 2007. For more information, contact the Office of International Affairs at 202-720-0226.

From the CIO

Frieda Achtentuch, Washington, DC

If someone had told me 3½ years ago when I first came to GIPSA that I would be the CIO for GIPSA, Infrastructure Technology Staff, ITS, I would have said, ‘No way!’ But here it is 2007 and I am the CIO, and what a great privilege that is. As all of our customers know, the GIPSA ITS has always tried to give the best possible service to all of our internal and external customers. ITS services include Networking, Operations, E-Business, Security, and other functions. To better serve GIPSA, ITS is making a few changes.

Starting in May 2007, ITS will be including a monthly ‘IT Tip’ in *GIPSA News*. This short blurb will address a variety of IT topics that may be helpful to you on the job and off. Suggestions are welcome.

We’ve made a few organizational changes as well. The Enterprise Architect Office has been moved from the Office of the Administrator to ITS and has been renamed the E-Business Office. The E-Business Office is headed by **Chuck Smith**, Chief Technology Officer, and includes the former Applications Branch, which services all P&SP and FGIS legacy systems. Our E-Business Office will be working with our Operations and Networking Branches in the GIPSA Application Modernization, or GAM, effort. As we enter 2007, we are starting to see the fruits of our GAM labors. I am sure that many of you are saying, ‘What are these new applications that we’ve been hearing so much about over the past 3 years?’ To

answer these questions, the E-Business office has created a read-only directory of documents and information that GIPSA employees can access. In this directory, you can read about the new FGIS, P&SP, and common GAM systems that are being developed. Take a look at: J:\GIPSA Specific\Major IT Projects\Projects.

Our Networking Branch, headed by **Bruce Griffith**, recently released its policy for the management of all GIPSA employee disk space on the Hdrive (<http://ingipsa.usda.gov:8010/policy/213.pdf>). ITS is implementing a 500-megabyte limit to everyone’s personal network space to help us manage valuable disk space. The Networking Branch continues to develop our Continuity of Operations, or COOP, effort. We are working with the Technical Center in Kansas City to ensure that if anything were to happen in Washington, our data would not be lost. Networking is also working closely with the E-Business Office to ensure our new GAM applications are on managed servers. Finally, Networking ensures that BlackBerries are functioning, Internet services are operational, email is working, and backups are completed, along with many other duties.

Our Operations Branch, headed by **David Will**, is providing Help Desk services on the new Modernization applications and our Legacy systems. **David** is also working with FGIS, the Management Support Staff, and P&SP to ensure that the next round of purchased equipment,

whether desktop or laptop, purchased as part of the Agency’s 25 percent replacement cycle meets employees’ needs. Our Help Desk also has the never-ending task of ensuring that our inventory is up to date. The Operations Branch also: rolls out new images and software onto your computers, ensures video and teleconferencing is up, coordinates NetMeeting, and ensures that Help Desk phone lines are answered Monday – Friday.

Our Security Staff, **Carol Remmers** and **Joe Garrity**, are working with USDA’s Cyber Security Office to ensure that our applications meet Departmental security standards. **Carol** and **Joe** work with Networking and Operations to ensure that our servers and laptops/desktops are scanned monthly for any suspicious activity. They are currently working on getting all of our legacy systems Certifications and Accreditations (C&A) approved. The team’s other duties include: security awareness, directives, plans of action, and milestones.

Finally, the ITS Administrative Staff, **Irene Omade** and **Pat Ogunyale**, do it all! Leave, budget, scheduling, human resources, travel ... everything to keep the ITS humming along.

I am truly grateful to be part of GIPSA’s technology staff. Most of you who already know me, know that I have an open door policy. Please feel free to call or drop me a line at any time. Any question or concern is welcome.

Travel Bits & Pieces

*Peggy Smith,
Washington, DC*

Updating Your Profile in FedTraveler. Please keep your profile in FedTraveler updated when any of your personal, employment, or travel card information changes. To update your profile, log into FedTraveler and on the "Traveler Information" screen, click on your name to bring up the screens to change your information. Be sure to save the changes to your profile, by entering your pin on the "Save Profile" page and click on "save."

Travel Charge Card Account Access. Bank of America, the contractor for all of USDA travel card accounts, has provided USDA cardholders access to their online account statement. Cardholders can register for access to their travel charge account information at http://www.gcsuthd.bankofamerica.com/eagls_selfregistration/selfreg.aspx. If you encounter problems while self registering, contact Bank of America's Technical Help Desk directly at 1-800-558-0548. Use this tool to monitor your travel card and ensure timely repayment in accordance with USDA's Zero Tolerance Policy. The underlying objective of

the USDA Zero Tolerance Policy is to eliminate misuse and abuse of the travel charge card so that it does not become necessary to impose disciplinary procedures on any USDA employee. Eliminating travel card delinquencies is a priority for Congress and the Office of Management and Budget and has been added to the President's Management Agenda for improving financial management. The Office of Chief Financial Officer continues to monitor all USDA travel card delinquency and abuse and reports incidents to each Agency.

New Telephone Number for Duluth Travel. Duluth Travel has a new phone number. Call 1-877-271-7281 to directly reach the Reservations Department without having to go through prompts.



GIPSA Idea Hotline Update

Norma Phelps, Washington, DC

Here is the idea received on the GIPSA Idea Hotline during March 2007. If you have questions about any ideas or the Hotline, please call me at 202-720-1017.

Suggestor

Suggestion

Toni Scandiffio-Anderson, Portland, OR	Develop Tickler System for Outlook Calendar or a Simpler System
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GIPSA Hotline Ideas Accepted and Approved for Implementation During March 2007

This list does not necessarily indicate that the idea was implemented as suggested or that it is currently in place (it could be in the development/implementation stage). To avoid the chance of misinterpretation, please call the Hotline if you have any concerns or questions regarding the following list of ideas.



Develop Tickler System for Outlook Calendar or a Simpler System

Keep those ideas coming in! Send your ideas to the GIPSA Idea Hotline via e-mail: gipsa-ideas@usda.gov; FAX to 202-720-1015; or telephone 800-455-3447 or 202-720-1013. For more information on the hotline visit <http://ingipsa.usda.gov:8010/ideahotline/hotline.htm>. **We encourage you to send ideas via fax or e-mail to reduce the possibility of transcription errors; however, ideas will be accepted regardless of the method you choose to use.**

For Your Health

Mavis Rogers, Washington, DC

You already know that a healthy diet should include plenty of fruits and vegetables. But all fruit and vegetables are not created equal. Here are some of the best fruits and veggies that are high in antioxidants and other disease-fighting substances:



★ **Bring on the broccoli.** By weight, broccoli has more vitamin C than an orange, and it roughly has as much calcium as milk. It is an excellent source of folic acid, potassium and fiber. Broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, and other cruciferous vegetables have been shown to have cancer-prevention effects.

★ **Carry carrots to work.** Carrots are good for snacks. One carrot gives you more than the recommended dietary allowance (RDA) of beta carotene. Carrots are also rich in potassium, which helps control blood pressure and is essential for your heart, kidneys, muscles and nerves.

★ **Peppers.** Reach for the red. Red peppers have three times as much vitamin C as citrus fruits.

★ **Pick a potato.** Sweet potatoes and white potatoes are both loaded with vitamin C and other nutrients. White potatoes are packed with potassium and sweet potatoes are packed with beta carotene.

★ **Cut up a cantaloupe.** Among melons, cantaloupe is the most nutritious. Just two-thirds of a cup cubed supplies 70 percent of your RDA for vitamin C, and nearly as much for vitamin A in the form of beta carotene. Cantaloupe also has potassium, folic acid, other B vitamins, and fiber.

★ **Stick with strawberries.** One cup of strawberries provides about 140 percent of your vitamin C RDA, and more fiber than two slices of whole wheat toast. Strawberries also contain potassium. You can get all of this from just 45 calories.

More nutritional bets include mangoes, pumpkin, kale, and spinach.

Shopping tip: The brighter or darker the color of produce, the more nutrition it may contain.

Courtesy TOPHEALTH – The Health Promotion and Wellness Newsletter.

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

Employee Assistance Program

Call for confidential help.

Washington, DC personnel, call...
301-570-3900
or 1-800-222-0364

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

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:

Dana Stewart
USDA, GIPSA, Stop 3614
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-3614
Phone (202) 720-5091
FAX (202) 690-2333
dana.b.stewart@usda.gov

by April 25, 2007!

OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR
USDA, GRAIN INSPECTION, PACKERS
AND STOCKYARDS ADMINISTRATION
STOP 3601
1400 INDEPENDENCE AVENUE, SW
WASHINGTON, DC 20250-3601
