



# GIPSA News

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

April 2009

## Contracting Study Wraps Up

*Randall Jones, Washington, DC*



*Randall Jones*

Beginning in 2006 and continuing through 2008, we conducted a pilot study to evaluate the benefits and costs of expanding the use of contractors to export port locations. During the 2005 reauthorization of the U.S. Grain Standards Act, there was much discussion by industry and in Congress regarding the use of contractors to perform grain inspection services at export port locations that are currently performed by FGIS staff. A number of factors prompted the discussions, including industry's contention that contracting offered the opportunity to save costs, and the retirement eligibility of 70 percent of FGIS graders provided a window in which retiring FGIS staff could be replaced with contract labor.

At the conclusion of the reauthorization process, Congress indicated FGIS should explore the use of its existing authority to employ contractors to provide official inspection and weighing services in lieu of FGIS personnel. Congress directed that this authority should be considered only if the action improves the competitiveness of the U.S. grain industry, maintains the integrity of the Federal grain inspection system, and provides benefits to FGIS employees who may be impacted.

For decades, we have augmented, on a limited basis, our Federal workforce with contract samplers. Following the reauthorization of the Act, FGIS implemented a program to evaluate the benefits and costs of expanding the use of contractors to export port locations. The pilot study, which ran from 2006 through 2008, focused on using contractors to: (1) provide supplemental labor at export locations serviced by FGIS, and (2) provide full inspection and weighing services at export port locations. The pilot included contractors providing direct export services at export facilities in California, Illinois, Indiana, New York, Ohio, and Wisconsin, and supplemental labor in Texas.

As part of FGIS's fact finding, the Agency published a notice requesting interested parties to provide service in New Orleans, League City, and Portland. The solicitation received five responses—none of the respondents currently have the necessary staff to perform the required weighing and certification activities. Each of the five respondents stated that they would use retiring FGIS personnel to conduct operations.

Based on our pilot study, the contractors did not prove they are currently positioned to provide fully trained staff who can perform the services currently performed by FGIS staff. Certification and weighing of grain at export facilities require skills not normally found in the labor force. FGIS requires a minimum of 2 years of training before employees are allowed to grade and weigh grain at export facilities.

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

# Names in the News

## PERSONNEL

**Charles Brown**, League City, was selected to be the industrial specialist. Previously, **Charles** was an agricultural commodity grader (ACG). Before joining FGIS in 1993, **Charles** served 20 years with the U.S. Army.

## AWARDS

**Carol Carter**, Western Regional Office (WRO), received a time-off award for extra effort and work with the 2008 Combined Federal Campaign for the WRO.

**Raymond Minks**, Washington, DC, received a time-off award for going above and beyond in preparing exhibits for administrative hearings when faced with a short timeframe for completion.

**Eleanor Tuilaepa**, WRO, received a time-off award for extra effort and work with the 2008 Combined Federal Campaign for the WRO.

## CONDOLENCES



*GIPSA Mourns Passing of Eurvin Williams*

**Eurvin Williams**, retired Chairman of the Board of Appeals and Review, died March 3, 2009, in Shawnee, Kansas. **Eurvin's** GIPSA career began in 1966 when he served as an agricultural commodity aid under a program to facilitate the hiring of minorities. His position was converted to an agricultural commodity grader (ACG) in 1969. He was later promoted to an ACG-9. In 1976, he became the assistant field office manager of the Peoria, Illinois, field office. He joined the Board of Appeals and Review in 1977 and served in several capacities, including head

of the Equipment and Protein Section; head of the Rice and Commodity Section; and Assistant Chairman. He became Chairman in 1990. **Eurvin** served as Chairman until his retirement in January 2004 after 37 ½ years of service. During his career, **Eurvin** helped develop various initiatives that improved the overall inspection system, including the Quality Assurance Specialist Program, the Interpretive Line Slide/Print Program, and the Wheat Variety Library Program. He is survived by his wife, **Chetteria**, and two children, **Robin** and **Eurvin Junior**.

**Jim Wear**, a retiree from the former Houston field office, passed away on March 13, 2009. Born on August 18, 1932, in Warren, Arkansas, **Jim** retired after 32 years of service with USDA. At the time he retired, Jim was the assistant manager of the Houston field office. After retiring, he worked a few years for Caleb Brett. Our prayers and thoughts go out to his family.

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## Mid-Year Performance Reviews

It is time for mid-year performance reviews. Your supervisor will be scheduling a meeting with you prior to May 1 to review your performance elements and measures, and discuss your progress toward meeting them. Take time to review your accomplishments as you prepare for the discussion.

# Meet FGIS' Two New Field Office Managers

*John Giler, Washington, DC*

On January 18, 2009, **Ed Durgin**, Portland, and **Dave Grady**, League City, became FGIS' newest field office managers. These two individuals bring more than 62 years of experience to FGIS. We are very fortunate to have them as leaders in our organization. I would like for you to get to know a little more about **Ed** and **Dave**. So, meet our two new field office managers.

**Ed Durgin**, Portland, began his involvement in grain inspection during the summer of 1966, when he worked as a grain sampler for the Washington State Department of Agriculture in Longview, WA. He returned to these activities the following two summers while attending Washington State University.

In 1975, **Ed** was hired by the Oregon State Department of Agriculture's Grain Division, and by FGIS in 1978. **Ed** worked in the Portland Field Office as an inspector and supervisor until 1999. He then transferred to Washington, DC, where he worked 10 years as a grain marketing specialist with the Office of International Affairs (OIA). While with OIA, **Ed** undertook numerous international assignments to train local inspection officials, discuss grain quality issues, and provide technical advice on grain standards, trade issues, and inspection procedures throughout Asia as well as in Algeria, Peru, Poland, the former Soviet Union, and Tunisia. He has represented FGIS in 21 different countries and completed two long-term assignments in Asia.



*Ed Durgin*

**Ed** received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Anthropology from Washington State University and attended graduate school at the University of Oregon where he received both Master of Arts and Ph.D. degrees in Anthropology.



*Dave Grady*

**Dave Grady**, League City, joined FGIS in 1977. He worked at the Pasadena/Houston field office from 1977 to 1986, and served in various positions with many accomplishments. From 1986 to 1988, **Dave** was the quality assurance specialist in the Kansas City field office, and from 1985 to 1988, was a senior member of the Board of Appeals and Review in Kansas City. In 1996, **Dave** transferred to the Field Management Division's Standards and Procedures Branch (now the Policies and Procedures Branch) in Washington, DC, where he was head of the oilseed program. In 1999, **Dave** was selected as manager of the Montreal, Canada, field office. He remained in Montreal until 2003, when he was selected as assistant manager of the League City field office. In January 2009, **Dave** was selected as the manager of the League City, Texas, field office.

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## Contracting, from page 1.

Further, contractors did not show that the cost of their services can provide savings that would improve the competitiveness of the U.S. grain industry. The information gathered during the pilot program does not support significant changes to FGIS's use of contract labor.

For those that may want to learn

more details of the study, you may find the report on our web site (under Education and Outreach > Reports and Studies).

I would be remiss if I failed to acknowledge the tremendous effort and hard work that FGIS staff put into this study. In particular, I want to acknowledge the contributions of

**John Giler**, director, Field Management Division, and **David Mundwiler**, manager, Toledo Field Office, who tirelessly worked on this assignment. Their dedication to this special project is a testament to their commitment to FGIS.

# Issuances

*Terri Henry, Washington, D.C.*

- ❑ FGIS Policy Memorandum Reference No. 220, “Removal of Expired Mycotoxin Test Methods”, dated March 9, 2009
- ❑ FGIS Issuance Change No. 3 to the Bean Inspection Handbook, Chapter 3, dated March 16, 2009
- ❑ FGIS Publication, “Inspecting Grain, Practical Procedures for Grain Handlers” February 2009 edition
- ❑ FGIS Directive 9180.81, “Quality Management Program: Requirements for Official Service Providers”, dated March 25, 2009

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## Regulatory Info

*Tess Butler, Washington, DC*

### Federal Register Publications

- ❑ Grain Inspection Advisory Committee Reestablishment – Published March 2, 2009
- ❑ Request for Extension and Revision of a Currently Approved Information Collection – Published March 6, 2009
- ❑ Opportunity for Designation in the Pocatello, ID; Lewiston, ID; Evansville, IN; and Utah Areas and Request for Comments on the Official Agencies Serving These Areas – Published March 19, 2009
- ❑ Designation for the Jamestown, ND; Lincoln, NE; Memphis, TN; and Sioux City, IA Areas – Published March 19, 2009

## GIPSA Goes Green



Energy conservation is at the top of the President’s and Secretary Vilsack’s priority lists. USDA and GIPSA are going green! We’re looking for your ideas on how GIPSA can conserve energy in the workplace.

Please submit your energy-saving ideas and suggestions to the GIPSA Idea Hotline at telephone 800-455-3447 or 202-720-1013; fax to 202-720-1015; or via email to [gipsa-ideas@usda.gov](mailto:gipsa-ideas@usda.gov).

Senior management will regularly review your ideas, and provide feedback either directly or via GIPSA News. With your input and assistance, **GIPSA will be going green!**

**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

# Performance Management at GIPSA

*Rosemary Mayne, Washington, DC*

In the Human Capital Officers Act of 2002, Congress required the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to design a set of systems for assessing the management of human capital. One key system that was developed relates to creating a results-oriented performance culture. The OPM Performance Appraisal Assessment Tool (PAAT) helps agencies assess the status of their appraisal programs and make improvements. In 2006, OPM began to review agency performance management systems using the PAAT.

The major components of the PAAT assessment framework include:

- Alignment
- Results Focus
- Credible Measures
- Distinctions in Level of Performance
- Consequences
- Employee Involvement
- Feedback and Dialogues
- Training
- Organizational Assessment and Guidance
- Oversight and Accountability

GIPSA recently submitted its 2009 self-assessment report to Marketing and Regulatory Programs, where it was reviewed before being submitted to the USDA's Office of Human Capital Management. After the Departmental review, the USDA assessment was sent to OPM for scoring.

So how does this affect you? USDA's performance regulation, DR-4040-430, addresses OPM requirements. Your performance plan must meet those requirements. You saw changes in your plan for fiscal year (FY) 2009, such as a mission alignment statement, credible measures, seven or fewer elements, etc. All GIPSA supervisors have completed performance management training; next all nonsupervisory GIPSA employees will be required to take performance training. Additional changes may be made to your FY 2010 performance plan to address the specific feedback we receive from USDA and OPM about our 2009 PAAT results.

The focus on a results-oriented performance culture is strong throughout the Federal Government because it is a component of improving organizational effectiveness and accomplishing the Agency's mission and goals. In a March 17, 2009, interview with *Government Executive*, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack said, "Tying what we do to specific articulated results is a very important function of what the management side of this agency has to do."

Creating a clear and meaningful performance plan for each employee is central to this effort. The PAAT provides guidance, a framework, and feedback to assist us.

# Converting PDFs to Word Docs

*Tanika Harris, Washington, DC*

Here's how to convert Portable Document Format (PDF) documents to Microsoft Word documents. This applies only to text documents.

- 1 Open the PDF File
- 2 Save the Document as a Tagged Imaged File (TIF )
- 3 Close the Document
- 4 Select My Computer
- 5 Locate the Document (for every page in PDF you will get a separate (TIF) document)
- 6 Right Click on the Document
- 7 Select Open With
- 8 Select MS Office Document Imaging
- 9 Select Tools
- 10 Select Recognize Text Using Optical Character Recognition (OCR)
- 11 Select Tools
- 12 Select Send Text to Word
- 13 Select Browse under Default Folder to specify the file location
- 14 Select Okay
- 15 Format the Document as desired
- 16 Save the Document as a Word Format

Please contact the GIPSA Helpdesk if you need additional assistance.

# IT Tidbit

*Tanika Harris, Washington, DC*

A Virtual Private Network (VPN) is a computer network in which some of the links between nodes are carried by open connections or virtual circuits in some larger network (e.g., the Internet) as opposed to running across a single private network. The link-layer protocols of the virtual network are said to be tunneled through the larger network. One common application is secure communications through the public Internet, but a VPN need not to have explicit security features, such as authentication or content encryption. VPNs, for example, can be used to separate the traffic of different user communities over an underlying network with strong security features. A VPN allows computer users to access a network via an IP address other than the one that actually connects their computer to the Internet.

The VPN Client allows organizations to establish end-to-end, encrypted VPN tunnels for secure connectivity for mobile employees or teleworkers.

Clear-text data transported over the public Internet can be intercepted and read. To keep the data private, it can be encrypted. Through digital scrambling, the data is rendered unreadable. For encryption to work, both the sender and receiver need to know the rules used to transform the original message into its coded form. Rules are based on an algorithm and a key. An algorithm is a mathematical function that combines a message, text, characters, or all three with a string of characters called a key. The output is an unreadable cipher string. Decryption is extremely difficult or impossible without the correct key.

## Common Problems & Possible Solutions to Try Before Calling the Helpdesk

- Unable to establish a connection. This problem occurs if you don't have an Internet connection. To ensure you have a connection - Open Internet Explorer and try to connect to (ex. [www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov) ).
- VPN connection is slow. If you experience extreme slowness while connecting to resources over VPN, inability to transfer large files or properly send/receive email, inability to use any application located at remote network site, it may indicate a Maximum Transfer Unit (MTU) problem. GIPSA's standard MTU setting for each Network Adapter should be set to 1300 unless instructed otherwise. Please contact the GIPSA Helpdesk to assist you with changing these settings.
- Secure VPN connection terminated locally by client. This problem occurs if your network password has expired or locked. Contact GIPSA Helpdesk to have your password reset or account unlocked.
- Host not found. This problem occurs when a host name has not been identified. Enter the host name (gvna-east.usda.gov).

## Questions the Helpdesk Will Ask

- Do you have an Internet connection?
- What type of connection do you use to connect to VPN (Wireless, DSL, High Speed Cable, etc.)?
- When was the last time you logged into the network?
- What are your current MTU settings? (Start, All Programs, Cisco Systems VPN Client, Set MTU)
- Do you have access to your network drives?
- Is the transport setting set to IPSec/UDP?
- Is your connection entry set to GIPSA via Direct ISP East?
- Is your host entry set to gvna-east.usda.gov?

### Employee Assistance Program

Call for confidential help.

Washington, DC personnel, call...  
1-800-222-0364

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

# For Your Health

*Mavis Rogers, Washington, DC*

Just about the whole world uses computers – for research, work, and, of course, games. Computers are very useful tools and are nearly compulsory in our everyday lives. However, computers can be very harmful to your physical condition, including to your eyes. Here are some ways to help keep your eyes healthy:



-  Make sure that you take regular breaks every hour. Try to look outside in the distance and look away from your computer. Try closing your eyes when your computer is loading data. Make sure that your vision is not blurred and that your eyes are not sore. If your eyes are sore, stop using the computer at once and have a nice rest. If this continues to happen, you might want to talk to an optometrist or any other eye specialist.
-  Keep the distance of the monitor from your eyes between 40 to 70 centimeters. Most people find a distance of 50 to 65 centimeters comfortable. Make sure that the top of the monitor is at a level slightly below the horizontal eye level. Try to tilt the top of the monitor away from you at a 10 – 20 degree angle. Most monitors are provided with tiltable display screens, which enable you to tilt the monitor to create an optimum viewing angle. It is also important that you keep your screen free of dust and fingerprints. You might also want to use a chair that lets you sit at an appropriate angle and distance from your computer screen
-  Make sure that your screen is not too bright and not too dark. Make sure that the light in the room is appropriate. Do not let any sunrays onto the screen as that will affect and change the brightness.
-  Glare is caused by nonuniform distribution of luminance within your visual field, as well as bright luminaries or windows. You can prevent glare by reordering your work station and moving the sources of glare out of your line of sight. You might also want to cover windows using venetian blinds, draperies, shades or filters to reduce glare from sunlight or the luminaries in your work environment. Another solution is to cover your monitor with an Anti-Glare Screen.
-  When the color of the video display screen is green, some users see pink after images. This is an unusual phenomenon called the McCullough Effect. The condition causes people who use computers for hours to see a pinkish fringe around certain images. Although this is a harmless after image, the after image is created when the retinal nerve cells that perceive the color green becomes saturated and the color red appears instead. Choose video displays that are not green in color to prevent this vision problem from occurring.

**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, 2009!**

**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](mailto:dana.b.stewart@usda.gov).

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