



GIPSA News

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

May 2007

From the Administrator

Jim Link, Washington, DC

Spring always brings an opportunity for a fresh start and change. This spring we have been busy continuing positive change in our organization. I have seen this occur through several events.

Just a few weeks ago, the Federal Grain Inspection Service conducted an Open Forum. The nationwide phone conference was held to inform employees about current news and address questions and look towards the future of our organization. Individuals actively took part in asking questions and listening. It was a demonstration of the dedicated and talented individuals we have in GIPSA. I enjoyed listening to the various presentations and am looking forward to the next Forum.

Also this month, the Packers and Stockyard Program took another step in the right direction. On April 2, we implemented the new business operating processes for the Packers and Stockyards Program. The new business processes provide GIPSA with performance measures and uniform national operating standards at all levels of the organization. This business process reengineering effort will allow the Packers and Stockyards Program to spend less time on administrative activities and more on program delivery to obtain a high level of compliance with the law and regulations.

Throughout my life, I have discovered that change is not always easy, but if done with a purposeful group, it can be powerful. As we grow and adapt, we can avoid growing pains by keeping our eyes on our primary purpose, which is regulating one of the most essential industries in the United States.

Thank you for your hard work and dedication. Your service to our agency is important and the work needed to continue to implement positive change is crucial to our success. With all of our efforts, we will continue to see new growth and exceed expectations. Thanks for your contributions. You are an essential part of GIPSA.

FGIS Holds First Open Forum

*Dave Shipman
Washington, DC*

On April 12, 2007, FGIS held its first Open Forum, an all-employee tele-conference aimed at improving communications across the program. The 2006 Organizational Assessment Survey and subsequent Action Teams highlighted a need for improved communication and offered a number of recommendations – the forum being one of them.

John Giler, John Sharpe, and I discussed a number of issues affecting FGIS, including what we do and the environment in which we operate; FGIS responses to OAS Action Team recommendations; Centralization of Oversight, Field Operations, and Kansas City Facility; Quality Management Systems for official service providers; the contracting pilot status; and the rollout of *FGISonline*, formerly known as GAM.

*Continued, see **Open Forum**
on page 3.*

Names in the News

PERSONNEL

Robert C. Anderson became GIPSA's resident agent in Provo, Utah, effective April 1, 2007.

Donna Ash began serving as the secretary for Policy and Litigation Division on April 1, 2007. **Donna** previously worked with the Farm Service Agency and has been with the Federal Government since 2001.

Kathy J. Boyd, formerly a marketing specialist in the Western Regional Office, is now a resident agent in Limon, Colorado.

Michelle Caldwell joined the Financial Unit of the Midwestern Regional Office on April 16, 2007. Michelle came to GIPSA from the U.S. Department of Energy's Office of Inspector General, where she worked for 7 years as an auditor. She

has a Bachelor of Science degree in Accounting from Utah State University, a Master of Business Administration from Idaho State University, and is a Certified Public Accountant and a Certified Internal Auditor.

Douglas E. Neesen joined GIPSA as an auditor in the Western Regional Office on March 18, 2007.

Roderick S. Prather joined GIPSA as a resident agent in Lubbock, Texas, on March 4, 2007.

Jerald R. Lenz joined GIPSA as an auditor in Waco, Texas, on March 18, 2007.

RETIREMENTS

Nancy Morris, marketing specialist, Eastern Regional Office, retired on April 30, 2007, with 27 years of Federal service.

Steve Warrilow, Tennessee resident agent, will retire on May 25, 2007, with 26 years of Federal service.

LEAVE DONATION

On January 22, 2007, **Gary Mustonen**, ACG, Portland, was seriously injured in an auto accident. **Gary** sustained multiple open and closed leg fractures, a fractured shoulder, and neck. He has had several subsequent surgeries to his legs and will require extensive physical therapy. Because of the injuries and physical therapy, it is uncertain how long it will be before he can return to work full-time. If you would like to donate either annual or restored an-

nual leave to **Gary**, 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>.

AWARDS

Terri Liberty, administrative assistant, and **Sara Ludwig**, office automation clerk, Technical Services Division, each received a spot award for exemplary work efforts during a time of reduced staff during which they displayed initiative, self-motivation, and positive attitudes in all areas.

Travel Bits & Pieces

Peggy Smith, Washington, DC

Travel Card Reminder. Renewal travel cards are mailed out 7-10 business days before the end of the month in which the card expires. Be sure to verify receipt of the card by calling the 800 number on the back of the card. Failure to verify receipt means that your new card will be inactive and unable to be used. Also, if you haven't traveled in 6 months or more, be sure to call the GIPSA travel coordinator to have your card activated in advance of your trip.

In This Issue

Names in the News	2
Travel Bits & Pieces	2
Regulatory Info	3
Issuances	3
Appreciation	4
Beacon Express Address	4
GIPSA Leads ACCA	5
Chebanse Pays Penalty	5
New P&S Rules	6
Consider the Stairs	6
Metheny in Thailand	7
Advisory Committee	7
Comp Time	8
IT Tidbit	8

Regulatory Info

Tess Butler, Washington, DC

Federal Register Publications

- United States Standards for Whole Dry Peas, Split Peas, and Lentils – Published April 17, 2007
- United States Standards for Beans – Published April 17, 2007
- Rules of Practice Governing Proceedings Under the Packers and Stockyards Act – Published April 17, 2007
- Request for Extension and Revision of a Currently Approved Information Collection – Published April 24, 2007

Issuances

Terri Henry, Washington, DC

- FGIS Issuance Change No. 6 to the DON (Vomitoxin) Handbook, Chapter 13, Charm Science Rosa® P/N Test kit, dated March 12, 2007
- FGIS Program Notice 07-03, “Alternate Method for Determining Internal Mold in Sorghum,” dated March 27, 2007
- FGIS Program Directive 9180.66, “Zearalenone Testing,” dated April 2, 2007
- FGIS Program Notice 07-04, “Optional Method for Detecting White/Red Wheat Kernels,” dated April 2, 2007
- P&SP Policy Memorandum 9730-07-004, “Cooperative Membership Fees – Deduction from Consignment Proceeds and Custodial Account Withdrawal Item,” dated February 22, 2007
- P&SP Policy Memorandum 9773-07-009, “Service of Subpoenas on Packers and Stockyards Program Personnel,” dated February 28, 2007
- P&SP Policy Memorandum 9720-07-001, “Bond Trustee Removal,” dated March 5, 2007
- P&SP Policy Memorandum 9700-07-019, “Approval to Grant Materials for Publication,” dated March 22, 2007
- P&SP Policy Memorandum 9778-07-017, “Elements that Establish a Rapid Response Investigation,” dated March 22, 2007
- P&SP Policy Memorandum 9700-07-016, “Electronic Tracking of Work and Assignments,” dated March 23, 2007.
- P&SP Policy Memorandum 9750-07-015, “New Packer and Market Orientations,” dated March 23, 2007
- The Packers and Stockyards Program (P&SP) Employee Manual, dated March 23, 2007
- Packers and Stockyards Program (P&SP) Employee Manual, Appendix H, “Chapter Exhibits,” dated March 23, 2007

Open Forum, *from page 1.*

Over the course of the 90-minute meeting, we answered a number of questions that were submitted prior to and during the Forum. A full summary of the meeting is posted on *inGIPSA* under “Plans and Reports.”

While holding a “meeting” of all FGIS employees is logistically difficult, and teleconferencing is an imperfect solution, we did manage to share a lot of information, receive and answer many valuable questions, and collect important feedback about the issues we discussed as well as how we can improve future forums. Your feedback is still welcome. Please send any ideas for bettering the forums to Dana Stewart at dana.b.stewart@usda.gov.

Many thanks to all who took part in the Open Forum. We’ll be scheduling more in the future.

And, many thanks to all who have used the FGIS Confidential Mailbox, a communication tool I introduced to give all FGIS employees the opportunity to send comments, questions, and suggestions to me in a protected format. (The emails are confidential and are only accessed by me and my assistant, Dana Stewart.) I’ve received very productive and thoughtful comments and questions via the mailbox, and I am deeply appreciative of all who have used it. Be assured that I am addressing all of the points raised, but unless your name is on your message, I do not know who authored incoming emails and cannot respond. Including your name on your message will allow for followup or clarification regarding the issue you have raised. I encourage you to continue to use this new communication tool, and the Open Forums, to improve FGIS for all of us.

The Grand Forks Field Office received the following letter from the Great Plains Food Bank. The Field Office donated 5,927 pounds of pulses to the Food Bank.

Tom Wrenn
USDA GIPSA/FGIS
Grand Forks, ND

Dear Tom,

Thank you for your recent donation to the Great Plains Food Bank. It will truly be a blessing for those we serve.

This year, one out of every twelve people in our community and state will turn to emergency feeding programs supplied by the Great Plains Food Bank for help. Thanks to caring and concerned people like you, none will be turned away empty-handed.

With your help, the Great Plains Food Bank will distribute almost six million pounds of donated food and grocery items for hunger relief efforts this year. Currently 236 food shelves, homeless shelters, soup kitchens and other charitable feeding programs in Fargo-Moorhead and almost eighty other North Dakota communities depend on the food bank for some or all of their food supplies.

And what a tremendous difference your contributions make in so many lives — children having enough to eat so they can learn to their full potential at school — seniors on fixed incomes not having to make the difficult choice between paying for rising medicine costs or food — working moms and dads having enough food to put on the table for their families when an emergency shatters an already tightly-stretched budget.

I have always wished there was some way to express how much this food means to someone who is hungry, homeless, or wondering how they will pay for groceries in the days ahead — but I don't think adequate words exist. So again, thank you for being an important partner in our fight against hunger. Your support provides real help and much-needed hope at a critical time for our many neighbors in need.

Thanks so much!

Sincerely,

Steve Sellent
Program Director

New Express Delivery Address for Beacon Facility

The Federal facility that houses the Kansas City duty point for several GIPSA offices has established a new collection point for all express deliveries into the Beacon facility. Effective immediately, please address any **express deliveries such as FedEx, UPS, DHL**, that are being sent to the GIPSA duty point located at 6501 Beacon Drive in Kansas City to:

USDA, GIPSA, Beacon Facility,
STOP 1404
9240 Troost Ave.
Kansas City, MO 64131-3055

NOTE: This change does not apply to regular mail delivery to the Beacon nor to any regular mail or express deliveries to the Technical Services Division.

**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

GIPSA Assumes Leadership of the ACCA

Byron Reilly, Washington, DC

The 2007 annual conference of the Agricultural Commodities Certification Association (ACCA) was held in Omaha, Nebraska, April 16–20, 2007. At the meeting, I was elected Vice President/President elect of association. I am succeeding **Marianne Plaus**, chief, Market and Program Analysis Staff, held the same position last year and is now serving as the ACCA President.

I have been an ACCA member for the last 3 years. While working on the speaker committee this year, I discovered that very few USDA people have ever heard of the ACCA. GIPSA has been active in the association since it was founded by the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) in 2000. The ACCA is a non-profit organization, whose membership consists of certification professionals and managers who are involved in providing objective assessments of agricultural commodities for quality and or condition in order to facilitate marketing. Agencies represented by ACCA members include Federal agencies like GIPSA, AMS, and the U.S. Department of Commerce, as well as State government agencies.

The Association's main objectives are to improve customer service and satisfaction through professional development and improvement of the individual. Every year, the ACCA holds an annual conference that specifically targets these areas by providing the members an opportunity to come together and exchange new ideas, discuss hurdles, and share success stories and solutions. Each year, the Association invites exceptional speakers to talk about high profile subjects that are challenging government and industry today.

The conference theme this year was "Globalization of Commodity Markets." We heard from speakers from GIPSA, AMS, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Foreign Agricultural Service, Department of Commerce, and Food Safety and Inspection Service, as well as from academia. Topics included international trade agreements, import/export certification issues, food safety, and bioterrorism, to name a few. The agenda always includes a field trip to an agricultural-related facility. This year we visited the Greater Omaha Packing Company to see beef being processed.

Marianne and **I** will soon begin organizing next year's conference in Boston, Massachusetts, April 14-18, 2008. I encourage GIPSA and other USDA employees to join the ACCA. Every year has been a real learning experience for me, and I always come away with new ideas to help me in my job. It's also a great place to make new friends and professional contacts.

For more information on the ACCA, please visit the web site: www.agcca.org or give me a call at (202) 690-3368 or **Marianne** at (202) 690-3460.

I hope to see you in Boston in 2008!

Chebense Grain, Inc., Pays Penalty to Settle USDA Charges

Chebense Grain, Inc., Chebense, Illinois, agreed to pay a \$5,000 civil penalty to settle an enforcement action brought by GIPSA.

Chebense was charged with deceptively loading two railcars of corn and attempting to cause the issuance of false official grain inspection certificates. Such action is a violation of the United States Grain Standards Act (USGSA), 7 U.S.C. 87b.

The complaint filed against Chebense was the result of an investigation conducted by GIPSA under the authority of the USGSA. The USGSA provides for the establishment of U.S. grain standards, and for the official inspection and weighing of grain shipped in domestic and international commerce.

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

New Rules for Resolving P&S Act Violations

On April 25, GIPSA published in the *Federal Register* changes to the rules of practice governing proceedings under the Packers and Stockyards (P&S) Act. The changes will allow GIPSA and persons alleged to have violated the P&S Act to settle cases in a more timely and less costly manner than previous procedures. It also provides GIPSA with another enforcement tool to obtain compliance in lieu of letters and warnings.

Under the new rules, GIPSA has the option to offer persons believed to be operating in violation of the P&S Act a stipulation agreement. The stipulation agreement gives notice that certain conduct discovered by GIPSA violates the P&S Act and allows the alleged violator an opportunity to voluntarily pay a specified penalty to resolve the case.

"This change brings GIPSA more in line with other USDA agencies that already have the ability to settle violation cases by stipulation agreement," said Bruce Knight, Under Secretary for USDA Marketing and Regulatory Programs (MRP), which includes GIPSA. "GIPSA can respond quickly to bring violators into compliance and, in doing so, offer better protection to America's farmers and ranchers." Stipulation procedures are available for use by the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) of USDA, another of the MRP agencies under Knight's oversight. APHIS has authority to use stipulation agreements in settling cases involving the Animal Welfare Act, Plant Protection Act, and Animal Health Protection Act, as well as other Federal laws.

The P&S Act provides for civil penalties of up to \$11,000 for each violation a person commits. By agreeing to settle cases by stipulation, alleged violators will have the opportunity to pay a civil penalty less than would be imposed if GIPSA were to file a formal administrative complaint. The lower penalty amount does not mean that GIPSA will be letting violators off easy. "For most people, a stipulation agreement will be offered just once," says GIPSA Administrator Jim Link, "if violations continue after we've reached an agreement, then GIPSA will file a complaint and seek more severe sanctions." As an additional deterrent, some violators who in the past would have received written warnings will now be faced with civil penalties.

"This change is good for everyone," says Link, "the industry we regulate benefits by having violators pay and come into compliance soon after a violation is discovered, and the violators are able to resolve their case quickly so it's not out there hanging over their heads for a long time." Taxpayers will also benefit as the cost for USDA to reach resolution in many cases will be greatly reduced. The change in the rules of practice takes effect immediately. Like civil penalties collected in cases where GIPSA files a formal complaint, stipulation payments are paid to the United States Treasury. If a person alleged to have violated the P&S Act chooses not to agree and pay the stipulation penalty, GIPSA will proceed with the filing of an administrative complaint and seek a higher penalty.

Consider the Stairs

Bryce Wilke
Midwestern Regional Office

On April 16th, employees of the Midwestern Regional Office joined Iowa **Senator Tom Harkin** for the "Consider the Stairs" initiative kickoff at the Des Moines Federal Building. This initiative encourages Federal government employees to use the stairs to get around their workplace in an effort to support healthy, active choices and overall wellness.

Senator Harkin told those in attendance that it is never too late to start an active lifestyle. Research shows that starting a more active lifestyle now can make you healthier and improve your quality of life. Every little bit counts when it comes to increasing your physical activity. He challenged everyone to carve out 30 minutes of exercise daily by looking for opportunities to be more active. Park your car farther from your destination so you have to walk a greater distance, or take the stairs instead of the elevator or escalator.

Public Law 109-115, Section 607, requires the General Services Administration to promote the use of stairs in all Federal buildings. The Des Moines Federal Building is undertaking a multi-faceted approach to enhancing the health benefits to Federal government employees of regularly choosing to use the stairs to get around their workplace. **Senator Harkin** is developing guidelines related to the physical and aesthetic characteristics of stairwells, to be implemented for new construction and major building renovations.

Following his presentation, **Senator Harkin** held a brief reception on the fifth floor of the Federal Building with the majority of the people "taking the stairs!"

Asia Collateral Duty Officer Sandra Metheny Mon the Web in Thailand



“Ms. Sandra A. Metheny - Grain Marketing Specialist from Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration - Federal Grain Inspection Service of USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) and Mr. Ponnarong Prasertsri, Agricultural Specialist from U.S. Embassy in Thailand pay a courtesy call on the President and executive member of the Thai Rice Exporters Association to discuss and exchange an idea on Thai rice on Wednesday, April 18, 2007, at the main conference room of the Thai Rice Exporters Association.”

Secretary Johanns Names Grain Inspection Advisory Committee Members and Alternates

On April 27, 2007, Agriculture Secretary **Mike Johanns** announced the appointment of five members and seven alternate members to serve on the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Grain Inspection Advisory Committee. The appointees will serve 3-year terms.

The new members are: **Chester Boruff**, chief executive officer, Association of Official Seed Certifying Agencies, Moline, Ill.; **William Dumoulin**, farmer/owner, Dumoulin Farms, Hampshire, Ill.; **Nicholas Friant**, grain handling coordinator, Cargill, Wayzata, Minn.; **Jerry Gibson**, regional manager, Bunge

North America, Destrehan, La.; and **Edgar Hicks**, grain marketing advisor, Hurley/FC Stone LCC, Omaha, Neb.

The new alternate members are: **Rudy Arrendondo**, president/CEO, National Latino Farmers & Ranchers Trade Association, Washington, D.C.; **Warren J. Duffy, Jr.**, vice-president, export operations, ADM, Ama, La.; **Thomas L. Fousek**, grain merchant/ manager, Bartlett Grain, L.P.; Kansas City, Mo.; **Dan W. Gross**, president, East Indiana Grain Inspection Inc., Muncie, Ind.; **Arvid Lee Hawk**, president, Global Agricultural Consultants, LLC, Eden Prais-

rie, Minn.; **Donnie R. Love**, plant superintendent, ADM, Ama, La.; and **Brian K. Sorenson**, technical directors, Northern Crops Institute, Fargo, N.D.

The Grain Inspection Advisory Committee is comprised of 15 members and 15 alternate members appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture who represent all facets of the grain industry. The Committee meets twice annually to advise USDA on the establishment of programs and services under the U.S. Grain Standards Act.

Compensatory Time Off In lieu Of Overtime Pay

Peggy Smith, Washington, DC

Beginning May 14, 2007, compensatory time must be used within 26 pay periods after the pay period it was earned. Any compensatory time not used within 26 pay periods must be paid out. For example, if during pay period 11, 2007, an employee earns 10 hours of compensatory time, and cannot use it by the end of pay period 11, 2008, it must be paid out at the overtime rate in effect when it was earned.

Compensatory time that was earned by an employee before May 14, 2007, and remains unused by this date must be used by the end of the leave year following the year it was earned. If the compensatory time remains unused at the end of this time period, it must be paid out at the overtime rate in effect when it was earned. For example, if on May 10, 2007, an employee earns 15 hours of compensatory time, he/she must use it by the end of the 2008 leave year, or it must be paid out.

Sunday Premium Pay: Employees are not eligible for Sunday premium pay during periods of paid absences which includes Time-Off Awards.

Lump Sum Payments: If an employee is placed in a Leave Without Pay (LWOP) status or is separated (1) to perform service in the military or (2) due to an on-the-job injury and has unused compensatory time, then he/she must be paid a lump sum payment for the compensatory time at the rate that was in effect when it was earned.

Military Leave: If an employee does not have enough military leave to cover a period of military duty and requests to use leave, he/she may use earned compensatory time-off for travel (CTOT). Policy already permits an employee to use earned annual leave, advanced annual leave, sick leave, etc. Military leave may be used for inactive duty, e.g., drills.

These changes will be posted in the Human Resources Desk Guide, sub-chapters 4550, Premium Pay, and 4630, Absence and Leave on May 14, 2007.

IT Tidbit

David Will, Washington, DC

Outlook uses its calendaring functions for what are called reminders. One can set up reminders when creating an appointment, meeting request, or task.

To set or clear a reminder for a specific task or appointment:

1. Open the task/appointment you want to set or clear a reminder for.
2. Select or clear the Reminder check box. If you are setting a reminder, you can also enter a date and time.

If you set a reminder but don't set a reminder time, the default reminder time is used. The default reminder is 15 minutes. To adjust the default reminder time, on the Tools menu, click Options. In the Reminder time box, select a time.

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

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by May 25, 2007!

OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR
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AND STOCKYARDS ADMINISTRATION
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