



# GIPSA News

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

*October 2010*

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## **P&SP National Meeting**

*Alan Christian, Washington, DC*

On September 14–16, the Packers and Stockyards Program (P&SP) staff gathered in Indianapolis, IN, for a national training conference. P&SP employees from Washington, the three regional offices located in Denver, Des Moines, and Atlanta, and our resident agents who work from their homes all across the country participated. It was an outstanding opportunity to network across organizational units, meet many new employees who were recently hired and, most importantly, to learn about our program operations and current initiatives.

The agenda was packed with presentations from Administrator **J. Dudley Butler** and Under Secretary **Edward Avalos**; administrative and technical breakout workshops; synopses of successful investigations; and recaps of the USDA/Department of Justice Competition Workshops. We also were delighted to hear from our Leadership Development Program participants about their current project assignments, and from guest speakers from the Commodity Futures Trading Commission, Economic Research Service, Office of the General Counsel, and Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. I especially liked the breakout sessions in which P&SP employees from around the organization shared their expertise with the rest of us.

A highlight of the meeting was a banquet, at which I was proud to recognize those who have gone “above and beyond” by volunteering to participate on teams to help improve our organization and our operations.

I’d like to extend my personal appreciation to each and every P&SP employee for your participation and contributions to our National Meeting. It was an honor and a pleasure to spend time with you and to continue our effort to build a bright future for the Packers and Stockyards Program.



## Names in the News

### PERSONNEL

**Tom Steele** is the new assistant manager of the FGIS Portland Field Office. **Tom** began his Federal career in 1978 as an agricultural commodity technician, later worked as an agricultural commodity grader, and was promoted to the quality assurance specialist position in Portland in 2004.

### AWARDS

**Tammy Chang**, Washington, DC, received an extra effort award for her outstanding leadership of GIPSA's budget formulation process.

**Jackie Crull**, Des Moines, received a time-off award for exemplary dedication related to working with new resident agents.

**Ruth Ortiz**, Washington, DC, received an extra effort award for creating, developing, and maintaining the master database for the Agency's conversion to the Financial Management Modernization Initiative (FMMI).

**Jeani Plautz**, Des Moines, received a time-off award for exemplary dedication related to providing administrative support to new resident agents.

**Jessica Power**, Des Moines, received a time-off award for exemplary dedication related to working with new agents and conducting investigations.

**Terry Ryno**, Des Moines, received a time-off award for exemplary dedication related to working with other resident agents to conduct poultry investigations.

## Regulatory Info

*Tess Butler, Washington, DC*

### Federal Register Publications

- ❑ Request for Public Comment on the United States Standards for Corn, published September 17, 2010
- ❑ Request for Public Comment on the United States Standards for Rough Rice, Brown Rice for Processing, and Milled Rice, published July 28, 2010

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

## Lean Six Sigma

*Rosemary Mayne  
Washington, DC*

USDA is facing an environment of change and increasing customer expectations while the availability of internal resources is declining. To better meet these challenges, the Department will use Lean Six Sigma as its approach to continuous process improvement. **Marianne Plaus**, Management and Budget Staff director, and I are the GIPSA Continuous Process Improvement-Lean Six Sigma (CPI-LSS) Deployment Champion and Secondary Champion, respectively.

CPI-LSS is a consistent methodology that is data- and fact-driven, and leads to measurable results using many tools. Use of the process aligns with **Secretary Vilsack's** goals to improve USDA to better serve our customers and be good stewards of taxpayer dollars. Recently, Assistant Secretary for Administrator, **Pearlie S. Reed**, stated:

*In an effort to achieve our responsibility for transforming USDA into a model agency,*

*USDA proposes to launch a Secretarial initiative to improve performance on key processes across the department. Process improvements such as reducing the number of days required to respond to an application or a piece of correspondence or cutting error rates in program eligibility can have major impacts on customer and employee satisfaction as well as ensure that USDA meets its obligation to be good stewards of public resources.*

You will be hearing more and perhaps be involved in the projects identified for CPI-LSS. If you are interested in learning more about the process now, check out AgLearn courses and/or books on the process. Also, in the coming months, look for updates in *GIPSA News*.

## Corn Standards Under Review

*Ross Heiman, Kansas City*

GIPSA is seeking public comment on the need for revisions to the U.S. standards for corn.

GIPSA is soliciting comments as part of the Agency's comprehensive review of the corn standards, which were last amended in 1996. Through this review, GIPSA is seeking to ensure that the standards remain relevant to the U.S. and global corn industry and continue to facilitate the marketing of U.S. corn. All aspects of the corn standards are being reviewed, including definitions, grade and non-grade determining factors, grade limits, damages, as well as grading procedures and new services GIPSA might offer.

Since the standards were last revised, the use of corn for ethanol and the number of different varieties of corn have increased tremendously. To ensure that standards and official grading practices remain relevant, GIPSA invites interested parties to comment on whether the current corn standards and grading procedures need to be changed.

GIPSA establishes standards for corn, and other grains, under authority of the U.S. Grain Standards Act. The standards facilitate corn marketing and define U.S. corn quality in the domestic and global marketplace by defining commonly used industry terms and outlining basic procedures for testing corn. Together, the grading standards and procedures allow buyers and sellers to communicate quality requirements, compare corn quality using equivalent forms of measurement, and help in price discovery.

The advance notice of proposed rulemaking seeking public comment on the corn standards was published in the September 17, 2010, *Federal Register*. Comments must be received on or before December 16, 2010.

### Employee Assistance Program

Call for confidential help.

1-800-222-0364

# FGIS Matters...!

*Randall Jones, Washington DC*

Another successful year of hard work has been completed by our inspectors in the field. FY 2010 was a busy year, thanks primarily to a record volume of soybean exports. It became evident early on that soybean inspections were going to blow past the previous record set in FY 2009. Currently, soybean inspections are 18 percent greater than in FY 2009, while total grain inspections are 10 percent greater than they were in FY 2009 and 3 percent greater than the 5-year average. With only one week of data left to be reported, these numbers will change very little when the final figures are tallied. Worth noting is that FGIS inspectors completed approximately 70 percent of the export inspection workload, in line with last year and the 5-year average. The following shows percentage of total inspections by field office: New Orleans – 47 percent, League City – 13 percent; Portland – 6 percent; and Toledo – 4 percent. The State of Washington, a delegated State, accounted for 20 percent of all export inspections. The remaining 10 percent of inspections were performed by other delegated States and by official agencies on containers.

For the year, corn inspections increased 3 percent, wheat inspections increased 13 percent, and sorghum inspections increased 8 percent over FY 2009 levels. Several field offices witnessed very large increases in workloads during FY 2010: Toledo's volume increased 53 percent, League City's increased 48 percent, FOSS' increased 38 percent, and Portland's increased 24 percent. Olympia experienced an 11 percent increase in volume. New Orleans had a small 1 percent decrease, while Cedar Rapids decreased 25 percent due to a reduction in containerized exports.

Looking forward to FY 2011, we are excited to see even greater forecasts for grain exports. In the latest September report, USDA forecasts a 12.6 million metric ton (10.6 percent) increase in exports of corn, soybeans, wheat, and sorghum for the 2010/11 crop years (FY 2011) over the previous 2009/10 crop years (FY 2010). (*Current crop years are Sep 10 – Aug 11 for corn, sorghum, and soybeans, and June 10 – May 11 for wheat.*)

Clearly, we expect it will be a very busy year for everyone in the field, but given the dedication and experience of our employees, I'm confident we can accomplish the task. I'm looking forward to another safe and productive year ahead!

Recently, the industry expressed concerns regarding the accuracy and consistency of corn quality determinations on barges at origin and destination (New Orleans) as well as determinations made on corn exports moving through New Orleans. FGIS has worked diligently over the past 2 months to address these concerns. The Board of Appeals and Review (BAR) and New Orleans Field Office have conducted more than 500 sample inspection reviews, including reviews of origin and destination file samples, and sample damage separations. Our very thorough analysis of the corn inspections demonstrated that the official inspection system is providing accurate and consistent inspection results. The comparison of the damage picked by FGIS inspectors and Quality Assurance Staff, official agency inspectors, and the BAR varied on the average less than .3 percent. We looked at the official inspection of barges at origin and compared these at destination in New Orleans. We found that damage increased by 2.2 percent, which is to be expected given the heat and humidity on the river this time of year. I am very proud of the inspection work begin performed by FGIS and official agency graders.

**Bob Lijewski, Dave Lowe, Tom O'Connor,** and I traveled to Omaha, Nebraska, on September 14-15, to meet with the American Association of Grain Inspection and Weighing Agencies Board of Directors. Issues of primary concern were the exception policy related to geographic territories, *FGISonline*, fee reviews, crop quality, staffing/retirements within FGIS, and the contract review program.

*Continued, see FGIS on page 5.*

**FGIS**, from page 4.

GIPSA held its 3<sup>rd</sup> annual headquarters picnic on September 9. Unfortunately, I was on travel in New Orleans and was not able to attend, but was informed the activity was a success! Thanks to those who participated and to the Picnic Committee – **Idelisse Rodriguez, Sherri Murphy, Andrew Greenfield, Rob Dorman, Tammy Chang, Pat Ogunyale, Jennifer Zuckman, Andrew Ping, Regina Ware, Candace Hildreth, Tyhisa Luckey, and Jeana Harbison** – for planning the event.

Also this month, FGIS managers met on September 20-23, in Portland, Oregon. The meeting had a packed agenda which included Advisory Committee resolutions, updates from each field office and division, and a review of our regulations. The group toured the Wheat Marketing Center located near the field office and participated in hands-on preparation and tasting of some of the wheat products produced at the center. The Executive Management Team will continue to discuss the issues and recommendations from this meeting. I would like to thank our hosts, the **Portland Field Office staff**, and especially **Ed Durgin, Cleve Ellis, and Tom Steele**, for all their support and assistance throughout the meeting. Great work!

As a reminder, if you have suggested changes to improve our operations, submit your change requests forms to [FGIS-CCWG@usda.gov](mailto:FGIS-CCWG@usda.gov).

Keep up the good work and stay safe!

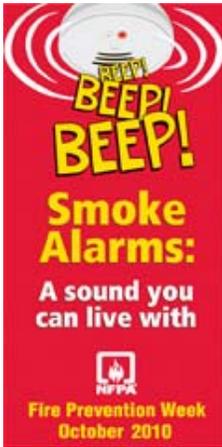


### **FGIS Managers' Meeting Portland, Oregon**

*Back Row (left to right): Scott Cooley, Dave Grady, Don Kendall, Phil Tate, Kerry Petit, John Pitchford, Bob Lijewski*

*Middle Row (left to right): Idelisse Rodriguez, Ed Stallman, Ron Metz, Tom O'Connor, Tom Steele*

*Front Row (seated, left to right): Diane Palecek, Ed Durgin, Randall Jones, Sandra Metheny*



## For Your Health

Mavis Rogers, Washington, DC

Fire Prevention Week  
October 3-9, 2010

**Fire Extinguisher Information.** After a smoke detector, your next investment in fire prevention and safety should be a fire extinguisher. Experts recommend at least one for every level of your home. They come in various sizes, so choose the size that fits your family situation and who you think is most likely to use it. The 5-pound model is probably the most popular. Extinguishers also come with designations of A, B, C, or all three. The letter refers to what type of fire they best extinguish. "A" refers to ordinary materials such as paper or wood. "B" refers to highly combustible materials such as cooking oil. "C" refers to electrical fires. Extinguishers with all three letters are good for putting out any kind of fire. The letters A and B also have a number with them; the higher the number the better the extinguisher is at putting out that type of fire. Extinguishers have either metal or plastic valves. Those with metal valves are refillable after use. Those with plastic valves are one-time only disposables. Fire safety experts recommend that you keep your extinguisher near the main exit of your home. That will help you remember where it is and let you use it as you are moving from the fire, which happens in the vast majority of cases. Some people also like to keep one in the kitchen.

**Fire Extinguisher Use.** Fire extinguishers will do you little good if you are not familiar with how to operate them. Most people will never use one in their lifetime or see one being used. But, it is a skill we should all acquire for the safety of ourselves and our loved ones. Consider attending a class on extinguisher use at a fire department. When you buy a new extinguisher, thoroughly read the instructions.

Here are the basics of using a fire extinguisher. At the top, near the valve, is a safety pin with a round piece attached to it. Grab hold of the round part of the pin and pull it out. Point the nozzle where the flames are coming from, not at the flames themselves. You want to shut the fire down at the source. Make sure you are at least six feet away from the flames. Squeeze the trigger, which releases the chemicals, and move the extinguisher back and forth in a sweeping motion to get good coverage while keeping it upright. That is all there is to it. It is not hard. But, when you are panicked, you do not want to be struggling with what to do. So, make sure you have the technique down before you actually need it.

Fire extinguishers cost a bit more than smoke detectors but are very reasonably priced. No home should be without at least one. If you ever need one and it is there, you will be thankful you invested in it. If you ever need one and do not have it, you may never forgive yourself for not spending a few dollars for safety and peace of mind. Do not take chances. Get a fire extinguisher and learn how to use it.

**Note:** Fire Prevention Week was established to commemorate the Great Chicago Fire of 1871. The first Fire Prevention Day was proclaimed by President Woodrow Wilson on October 9, 1911, on the fortieth anniversary of the Chicago blaze. Fire Prevention Week was created to get people thinking in terms of preventing rather than fighting fire. Fire Prevention Week is sponsored by the National Fire Protection Association, and is the longest running public health and safety observance on record.

Courtesy: *Safetyresource.org*

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 October 25, 2010!

**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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