



# GIPSA News

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

*November 2010*

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## 2010 Organizational Assessment Survey

*Irene Omade, Washington, DC*

Many changes are happening at USDA, such as cultural transformation, the Virtual University, new regulations, and other actions. GIPSA is being stretched now more than ever to meet critical demands. During this dynamic time, **YOU** have the chance to provide your thoughts on what you think is important.

GIPSA employees participated in the GIPSA Organizational Assessment Survey (OAS) in 2006 and 2008. In 2006, Action Planning Teams developed and presented a variety of improvement recommendations based on their study of the results. Even more projects were implemented as a result of the 2008 survey findings, including performance appraisal training for supervisors, the P&SP Mentoring Program, suggestion boxes, and town hall meetings. Additional changes took place on the local level.

From about November 1-29, 2010, permanent full-time and part-time Federal employees in GIPSA will have the opportunity share thoughts and ideas about the agency through the GIPSA 2010 OAS.

Your feedback is needed to ensure that management knows the views of employees. Why again? Your input will help ensure your voice is heard. The success of this survey depends on all employee response rates and all employees are encouraged to complete it. The survey is voluntary and you can complete it during work hours in less than 30 minutes.

After the surveys are collected and the results analyzed by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), the report summarizing GIPSA's current strengths and weaknesses will be posted on *inGIPSA*. The data also will allow us to determine if the changes made in response to the 2008 survey had an impact on the agency. The results will be used to clarify further actions to improve and enhance GIPSA's organizational effectiveness.

The email invitation to take the 2010 OAS will come from GIPSA. The OAS is completely anonymous and only OPM will have access to the data. GIPSA contracted with the OPM to administer the survey and process the results. Survey responses transmitted to OPM from the participant are encrypted using industry-standard Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) technology. (This is the same security used by retailers and financial institutions to protect purchase and personal financial information sent over the web.) Any computer with a connection to the internet can be used to respond to the survey, not just the agency computers. Be assured that no individual responses will be identified, so please answer openly and honestly.

So take some time to provide your input to GIPSA. Completing the OAS is a great opportunity for you to help shape the evolution of the work-environment at GIPSA. The Agency can only address your concerns if we know about them.

If you have any questions or concerns about accessing the survey, please contact Rosemary Mayne (e-mail: [rosemary.k.mayne@usda.gov](mailto:rosemary.k.mayne@usda.gov) or 202-720-6242) or Irene Omade (e-mail: [M.Irene.Omade@usda.gov](mailto:M.Irene.Omade@usda.gov) or (202) 720-8479).

# Names in the News

## PERSONNEL

**Wade Berteau** is the new grain marketing specialist with Field Management Division, New Orleans. **Wade** will be responsible for the Inspection Testing and Weighing program, as well as duties in grain inspection and certification procedures. **Wade** joined FGIS in 1977. During his career, he has excelled as an agricultural commodity grader and as a shift supervisor in the New Orleans Field Office.

**William Kelly**, chief, Network-Telecom and Customer Support Branch, Information Technology Staff, departed GIPSA for the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. We wish **William** all the best. **Morris Johnson** will be acting branch chief for 120 days.

## AWARDS

**Frieda Achtentuch**, Washington, DC, received an extra effort award for outstanding contributions to GIPSA operations in FY 2010.

**Linda Alston**, Washington, DC, received an extra effort award for exceptional dedication and performance at a sustained high level, and for leading and performing duties for the Civil Rights Staff and its overall mission.

**Eugene Bass**, Washington, DC, received an extra effort award for outstanding contributions to GIPSA operations in FY 2010.

**Rita Bhanot**, Washington, DC, received an extra effort award for exceptional dedication and performance at a sustained high level, and for leading and performing duties for the Civil Rights Staff and its overall mission.

**Tess Butler**, Washington, DC, received an extra effort award for completing assignments in an exceptionally competent and timely manner.

**Dawn Cowan**, Washington, DC, received an extra effort award for exceptional dedication and performance at a sustained high level, and for leading and performing duties for the Civil Rights Staff and its overall mission.

**Terri Henry**, Washington, DC, received an extra effort award for outstanding research on lodging and meeting space for the PSP National Meeting 2010.

**Tyhisa Luckey**, Washington, DC, received an extra effort award for outstanding planning, coordinating, and work on the PSP National Meeting for 2010.

**Jacques Meadows**, Washington, DC, received an extra effort award for exceptional dedication and performance at a sustained high level, and for leading and performing duties for the Civil Rights Staff and its overall mission.

**Erik Mojica**, Washington, DC, received a time-off award for providing assistance to the Compliance Division, Regulatory Branch, during the implementation and the conducting of the Contract Review Program.

**Joanne Peterson**, Washington, DC, received an extra effort award for exceptional performance in coordinating and overseeing GIPSA's response to the FOIA request for information on genetically altered rice.

**Kristen Pirtle**, Des Moines, received an extra effort award for outstanding performance and leadership while acting as the Administrative Officer.

**Marianne Plaus**, Washington, DC, received an extra effort award for outstanding contributions to GIPSA operations in FY 2010.

**Jhonna Robinson**, Atlanta, received a spot award for outstanding work on the PSP National Meeting for 2010.

**Kevin Smith**, Washington, DC, received an extra effort award for exceptional dedication and performance at a sustained high level, and for leading and performing duties for the Civil Rights Staff and its overall mission.

*Continued, see Names  
on page 3.*

## Issuances

Terri Henry,  
Washington, DC

- FGIS Program Directive 9180.74, Service Fees and Billing Codes, dated October 1, 2010
- FGIS Policy Memorandum Reference No. 236, Revised DON Testing of Corn to a subplot basis, and Supplemental Testing certification options, dated October 5, 2010
- FGIS Program Notice 11-01, National Soybean Export Assessment Sample Collection Plan for Export Field Offices, dated October 11, 2010

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## Regulatory Info

Tess Butler, Washington, DC

### Federal Register Publications

- Request for Extension and Revision of a Currently Approved Information Collection, published October 1, 2010

## Email Cleanup Strategies

Frieda Achtentuch, Washington, DC

As you may have heard, GIPSA will be moving to the Department's email service. Currently we don't know when the email move will take place. What we do know is that many of our mailboxes are too large.

Please take a moment to clean out your mailbox. Determine if you really need that email. If you have a copy of the email and or attachment, there is no need to duplicate it in email.

Below are listed some strategies for easy mailbox cleanup. If you would like other methods to reduce your mailbox size, go to the *inGIPSA* web site and click on Mailbox Cleanup under Information Technology, Help Desk. Thanks in advance for your cooperation.

### Input Box and Sent Items

1. Sort on Subject. Delete unnecessary emails.
2. Sort on Received by. Delete unnecessary emails.
3. Sort on size. Delete any large emails

### Deleted Items

1. Go to Edit
2. Select All
3. Select Delete

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### Names, from page 2.

**Dexter Thomas**, Washington, DC, received an extra effort award for sustained, dedicated quality support provided to GIPSA and the 2008 Farm Bill, and for completing other complex projects in a timely manner.

**Amanda Tucker**, Washington, DC, received an extra effort award for outstanding planning, coordinating, and work on the PSP National Meeting for 2010.

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### RETIREMENT

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**Larry Engebretson**, agricultural engineer, retired on October 29, 2010, after 21 years of service

with the FGIS Technical Center. **Larry** came to FGIS in 1989 after a distinguished career in the grain industry, where he had extensive involvement with grain elevator installations and research related to grain sampling and inspection equipment. While at FGIS, **Larry** was the Agency's expert engineer. **Larry** received his degree in agricultural engineering from Iowa State University, after which he joined the Marines and served a tour in Vietnam. He and his wife, **Mary**, plan to remain in the Kansas City area. **Larry's** expertise, dedication to the Agency, and positive attitude will be sorely missed. We wish him the very best in his retirement.

# FGIS CCWG

*Tandace Scholdberg, CCWG Chairperson, Kansas City*

Greetings from the Change Control Work Group! Since our group's inception approximately one month ago we have had two change requests submitted. The first change request involved modifications to the actual change request form. This request was processed and we are happy to report that the new change request form is more use-friendly in a fillable pdf format. Our second change request involved the creation of a USDA People's Garden at the Technical Services Division, Kansas City MO. This request is under consideration while further information is gathered regarding available space, etc. So as you can see, change requests can take many forms and address a variety of issues. So remember, if you have any suggestions to further the success of FGIS, please fill out your change request, available at [http://ingipsa/Program-Essentials/FGIS/FGIS\\_CCWG\\_CR\\_form.aspx](http://ingipsa/Program-Essentials/FGIS/FGIS_CCWG_CR_form.aspx). The request should then be emailed to: [FGIS-CCWG@usda.gov](mailto:FGIS-CCWG@usda.gov). We are looking forward to hearing from you!!

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## The Harvest

*Pete Sepeda, Toledo*



Before a single seed is sown, the harvest is already alive. Steel to earth marks the time. Exhaustive sweat from dark to dark. Praying not to be consumed by it. Only the start of the day is known. What lives are put on hold. The harvest calls!

To men far away who ready their vessels. Loved ones kissed good-bye. The voyage must be made to distant shores. Happy are those who return from the sea.

Inline the wait, having to arrive way too early. The cost to drive the earth's gold to market. Will the collectors money buy enough security for my family.

You who weigh and count sometimes down to the seed. With a hope that the day will end at a decent hour. You are mostly unknown, but the harvest cannot survive without you.

## Grain Inspection Advisory Committee to Meet

The Grain Inspection Advisory Committee will meet November 17-18, 2010, in New Orleans, Louisiana.

The Advisory Committee provides advice to the GIPSA administrator with respect to the implementation of the U.S. Grain Standards Act (7 U.S.C. 71 et seq.). Information about the Advisory Committee is available on the GIPSA Web site at <http://www.gipsa.usda.gov>. Under the section "I Want To \* \* \*", click on "Learn about the Grain Inspection Advisory Committee."

The agenda will include updates on international affairs, review of domestic and export corn grading, the National Grain Center, sorghum odor, the Yamamoto Sheller Study, and other FGIS programs.

For further information contact Terri Henry at (202) 205-8281.

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

# **FGIS Matters...!**

*Randall Jones, Washington DC*

Our inspection volume is off to a great start this fiscal year! During the first 3 weeks, total grain export inspections are 91 percent ahead of last year at this time, and nearly 40 percent ahead of the 5-year average. China has been the main destination so far, accounting for 36 percent of total inspection volume. Nearly all exports to China have been soybeans and, as a result, soybeans are 169 percent ahead of last year – which was a record-setting year! Other major grains are also outpacing last year: corn is up 35 percent, wheat is up 44 percent, and sorghum is up 161 percent.

New Orleans has seen the largest tonnage increase - 2.5 million metric tons above last year for a total of 4.5 million metric tons for the first 3 weeks. Olympia and League City are up 747,000 tons (71 percent) and 575,000 tons (93 percent) respectively; Toledo's and Portland's volumes have increased 177,000 tons (41 percent) and 138,000 tons (51 percent) respectively.

In October, **Andrew Ping**, Office of Departmental Initiatives and International Affairs, met with representatives of the Korean Feed Association (KFA) in New Orleans to begin a corn sampling project. **Andrew** and KFA representatives witnessed the sampling, inspection, and loading of a corn shipment bound for Korea. **Andrew** will travel to Korea to witness the unloading of the same vessel. FGIS has worked closely with the North American Export Grain Association and the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service in developing this project to foster an understanding of U.S. grain sampling and inspection procedures.

On November 17-18, I will travel with FGIS managers to New Orleans for the Grain Inspection Advisory Committee meeting, where we will address domestic and export corn grading, the exceptions program, international programs, the National Grain Center, and the 15,000-metric-ton Waiver Program requirements.

In response to an EEO survey completed by New Orleans field office employees and an EEO Advisory Committee recommendation, FGIS leadership will participate in a listening session in New Orleans on November 15-16. The session will give employees and managers an opportunity to voice opinions and hear responses from leadership, and will provide insight into important factors such as leadership, employee perceptions, cohesion, morale, hiring practices, and the human relations environment. All NOLA employees are encouraged to attend. We anticipate this meeting will have a positive impact on organizational effectiveness and mission accomplishment.

On December 7, **Tom O'Connor**, **Bob Lijewski**, and I will travel to Portland to meet with Union officials from New Orleans, League City, and Portland in a labor-management forum. The forum is being held in accordance with Executive Order (EO) 13522, "Creating Labor-Management Forums to Improve Delivery of Government Services." The EO establishes a cooperative and productive form of labor-management relations designed to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of government operations. The forums will be venues to work together with the Union to identify problems and propose solutions. The goal of the first forum is to create a working document that will delineate processes on how to better consult with the Union on ideas before implementation, expand the pool of ideas on how to improve labor/management relations, and obtain greater buy-in from Union members. We also plan to develop metrics to measure our progress in meeting the President's objective. I look forward to attending this first forum and to continuing to build upon our great working relationship with our Union representatives.

From all accounts, November will be very busy for the official inspection system as exports are projected to be well ahead of last year's pace. I, as well as the rest of the FGIS management team, certainly appreciate the hard work of each of our FGIS team members on a daily basis.

I will close with a quote from Benjamin Franklin who said "It takes many good deeds to build a good reputation, and only one bad one to lose it."

# MRP Hiring Reforms

A Presidential Memorandum on improving the Federal recruitment and hiring process was issued on May 11, 2010, directing agencies to develop a common-sense hiring process designed to attract and hire high-quality candidates in a timely manner. It also calls on agency managers and supervisors, with assistance from Human Resources, to assume a leadership role in recruiting and selecting employees from all segments of our society.

The memorandum outlines five key areas of the hiring process that require action by November 1, 2010:

1. Eliminating narrative essays and responses to KSAs during the initial application phase.
2. Increasing involvement by managers and supervisors.
3. Implementing Category Rating for case exam announcements.
4. Simplifying application submission, i.e., resumes and cover letters.
5. Providing applicants with an update on the status of their application at the key stages of the process.

In the Marketing and Regulatory Programs agencies of GIPSA, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, and the Agricultural Marketing Service, action has already taken place to simplify application submission and update applicants on their application status:

- Applicants can now apply for jobs by uploading resumes in formats of their choice, as opposed to following the resume builder format in USAJOBS, which was required in the past; and
- Applicants for jobs in MRP can get information on their application status by accessing a website where application status is posted by HR at each phase of the application review and referral cycle. Job applicants are advised during the application process how to check for application status.

The following information addresses the changes that will take place in response to the first three of the five key areas outlined above:

## **Elimination of Narrative Essay/Responses to KSAs (New Hiring Process Required)**

As a result of the Presidential Memorandum, the use of essay-style questions or KSA statements during the initial application phase is no longer permitted. This requires HR to develop alternatives to past practice in order to make 'best-qualified' determinations.

## **Changes for HR/Hiring Managers**

- *Recruitment Consultation/Hiring Flexibilities:* HR will continue its efforts to have more meaningful conversations with hiring officials by providing them with data on past recruitment efforts for the subject or similar position(s). This information will help HR and selecting official analyze and identify where highly-qualified candidates may be located and how to meet diversity goals. HR will help guide the decision to either 1) announce a vacancy, with targeted recruitment, as necessary, or 2) fill the vacancy using available hiring flexibilities, which include special appointing authorities for veterans, students, the disabled, etc.

*Continued, see MRP Hiring Reforms on page 7.*

## **MRP Hiring Reforms, from page 6.**

- *Alternatives to KSAs:* HR developed models based on occupation, application volume, etc., that provide alternate assessment methodologies that hiring managers can utilize depending upon the job being announced and its past recruitment history. The alternatives may include the use of interviews to help determine the best qualified, the use of questionnaires and/or the use of a paper-panel process used to assess resumes, etc. The models are designed based on hiring manager feedback, analysis of past recruitment efforts across the agency, and on the evaluation of “best practices” of other federal agencies and the private sector.

### **Benefits**

- Increased opportunity for hiring managers to diversify their work force through the use of special appointing authorities for veterans, students, the disabled, etc.
- Increased involvement by managers and supervisors in the hiring process.
- Provides historical information to hiring managers on past recruitment efforts to improve decision-making process related to how, when, or if, a job should be announced or filled through alternative methods.

**Changes for Applicants.** Job applicants will no longer be required to respond to KSA statements or questions that require a narrative response. However, applicants will need to read carefully each vacancy announcement and ensure their resume fully addresses all the requests/requirements listed in the announcement and should make sure the resume fully illustrates how their background and experience meets the job requirements.

### **Category Rating**

**Definition and Background.** A ranking and selection procedure used to assess applicants for positions filled through the delegated examining process. The new procedure replaces the “Rule of Three”.

**Purpose.** To increase the number of eligible candidates referred to a selecting official while preserving veterans’ preference rights.

### **Process.**

- Candidates are evaluated based on job-related criteria and placed into ‘quality’ categories with individuals who possess similar competencies. Selections are made from highest quality category. Any candidate from the highest category may be selected, as long as a veteran is not passed. (A veteran has preference in the selection process.)
- Candidates are referred alphabetically; but veterans are listed ahead of non-veterans. For scientific/professional positions at the GS-9 or higher, a qualified veteran with a disability of 10% or more will float to the top of his/her *respective* category. For all other positions, a qualified veteran with a disability of 10% or more will float to the top of the *highest* category

### **Benefits**

- Provides a bigger pool of applicants from which to select (not limited to the top 3)
- Substantially equally-qualified candidates are treated as such, by placement in the same ‘quality’ category

# GIPSA at FFA

Jennifer Hill, Washington, DC

On October 20, 2010 **Joshua Liang**, Technical Services Division; **Leslie Jordan**, Midwestern Regional Office, and **I**, Office of Departmental Initiatives and International Affairs, traveled to Indianapolis, IN to represent GIPSA at The National FFA Organization's National Convention Career Show.

FFA is a national youth organization that is dedicated to making a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premiere leadership, personal growth, and career success through agricultural education. The organization prepares its more than 500,000 members for leadership and careers in the science, business and technology of agriculture. FFA is comprised of 7,487 local chapters in all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. At its national convention each year, students from all parts of the United States including Alaska, Puerto Rico, and Hawaii to celebrate their strides toward a greater future for agriculture. This year's show set an all-time event attendance record with 54,942 members participating.

At the 2010 convention, GIPSA shared a booth with the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS). We jointly educated all of the visitors to our booth about our agencies' missions and programs, as well as employment and scholarship opportunities.

Most of the students at the career show are still in high school and gravitated toward the table when they saw the shiny pens covered with the GIPSA name, colorful "Got Milk?" smiley face buttons, and large "USDA Prime" bags. Once at the table they talked with us about their interests in agriculture and their plans for the future. Since the AMS/GIPSA booth was grouped with the other USDA agencies it was easy to point students in the right direction if GIPSA didn't exactly fit their plans for their next step. We're already thinking that should GIPSA attend next year, we'll include an interactive presentation or game at the booth to draw in more students.

**Josh** added, "This experience was really great. I've never been exhibiting from a booth before so this was a first time for me. The students seemed to very enthusiastic. For the most part, older students and advisors were very interested once we started talking to them. At the sound of the internship, scholarship, and job opportunities, they started to get quite interested. This has been a wonderful experience and hopefully I could do this again."

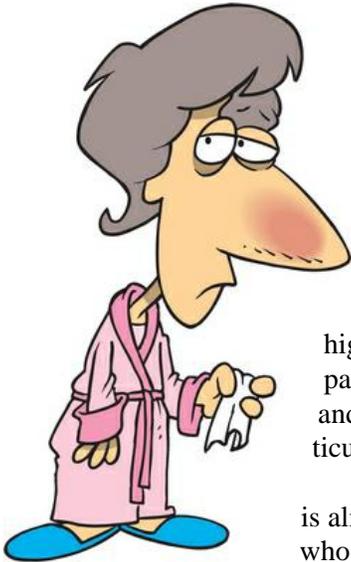
All in all, it was a great experience that left a good feeling that there are more people in the world who know about GIPSA and its contributions to American agriculture.



**Need to change something  
other than your socks?**



**Then fill out your change request form  
available at [inGIPSA](http://inGIPSA) and email it to:  
[FGIS-CCWG@usda.gov](mailto:FGIS-CCWG@usda.gov)**



## For Your Health

Mavis Rogers, Washington, DC

**Colds and Flu.** Are Colds and Flu the same thing? No, but colds and flu do share many similarities. Both are caused by viruses. A cold is typically caused by the rhinovirus and the flu caused by the influenza virus. Both colds and flu are highly contagious, involve the respiratory tract, and have a fairly predictable seasonal pattern. Flu symptoms are often more severe than cold symptoms. The terms cold and flu are often used interchangeably. However, there are important differences particularly in terms of prevention.

**How can I protect myself against cold and flu?** Colds are so common that it is almost impossible to completely avoid catching one. Avoid close contact with people who have a cold, especially during the first 3 days when they are most contagious.

Wash your hands frequently. Keep your fingers away from your eyes, nose and mouth.

The flu vaccine can help prevent or decrease the severity of many flu cases. Because the flu virus undergoes constant change, new vaccines are developed every year. The optimal time to receive the flu shot is from early October to mid November. Influenza activity generally peaks between late December and early March in the United States. The flu vaccine is strongly recommended for individuals with a compromised immune status – adults over 50, and pregnant women who will be in their second or third trimester during flu season.

**Is the flu vaccine safe?** Yes, the vaccine is made from inactivated virus. A person cannot get the flu from the flu vaccine. Some people – less than one out of three, will develop soreness around the site for 1 to 2 days. The flu vaccine is not recommended for people who are allergic to eggs. The viral material is grown in eggs and may cause an adverse reaction. The vaccine also is not recommended for people with an acute illness. They should wait until they make a complete recovery.

**Should I starve a cold and feed a fever?** No, this is not good advice. Your intake of fluids should be increase when you have a cold or fever. You should eat enough to satisfy your appetite. Other myths concerning colds, such taking as large doses of vitamin C and herbal treatment of Echinacea, have not been proven to effectively prevent or cure colds.

**Is the stomach flu also caused by the influenza virus?** Yes, but this is not generally associated with the main symptoms of the flu and occurs in only one out of three patients. The term “stomach flu” is misleading. Other viruses typically cause stomach distress.

For more information, check out the following websites: American Lung Association (<http://www.lungusa.org>); Center for Disease Control and Prevention (<http://www.cdc.gov>); and WebMD (<http://www.webmd.com>); and Flu.gov (<http://www.flu.gov>).

*Courtesy: Federal Occupational Health Articles*

### Employee Assistance Program

Call for confidential help.

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**

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by November 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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