



GIPSA News

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

December 2005

From the Administrator

Jim Link



Jim Link

As 2005 draws to a close, I have been looking back and reflecting on my path to GIPSA this past year. While my personal changes seem great to me, my move from Texas Christian University to Washington, DC, pales in comparison to the challenges that many of our employees faced this year. Of special note, of course, is the plight of our folks on the Gulf Coast who were battered by storms. My thanks and admiration to all of you who brought our operations back up to speed so very quickly, all while rebuilding your personal lives.

I realize that my arrival in GIPSA brings change to your jobs. Many of you have been working with **Dave Shipman** these last 9 months, and I want to thank **Dave** for doing an outstanding job as acting administrator of GIPSA and deputy administrator of FGIS.

As part of my transition into the Agency, I have been visiting with

many of the regional offices, and look forward to traveling to other field locations as soon as my schedule permits. It is critical for me to understand your jobs so that I can better understand my own.

I am also committed to hearing employees' feedback. I recently set up a new web site at <http://dcweb2/gipsaconfidential> that allows GISPA employees to send comments, suggestions, and concerns directly to me. Your communications are confidential and will only be viewed by myself and my confidential assistant. Please use this site as an opportunity to share suggestions for improving our organization.

In mid-January, you will have the opportunity to complete an Organizational Assessment Survey on your views about important issues facing GIPSA. The survey is completely anonymous. GIPSA contracted with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to administer the survey and process results. Survey responses transmitted to OPM from the participant are encrypted using industry-standard Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) technology. (This is the same secu-

rity 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 computers at GIPSA. Be assured that no individual responses will be identified, so please answer openly and honestly. The survey is voluntary and can be completed in less than 30 minutes during work hours.

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Names in the News

RETIREMENTS

John Heidorn, agricultural commodity grader, New Orleans, retired with 31 years of service. We wish **John** all the best as he begins a new adventure.

Pat Smith, Wichita, delayed her scheduled October 29, retirement by one month to help the field office fulfill its commitment to Compliance Division to assist with upcoming reviews, and to help complete the transition to the new fiscal year. Many thanks to **Pat** and we were glad to have you for one more month.

LEAVE DONATION

Joan Danielson, an economist in the Western regional office of the Packers and Stockyards Programs, remains in need of donated annual leave. **Joan** continues her on-going battle with cancer and remains unable to return to active duty. **Joan** highly appreciates the generous leave donations that she has received so far. To donate annual or restored annual leave to Joan, 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: www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/forms/payforms.html. Donor Application forms must be submitted prior to December 16, 2005.

AWARDS

Jill Ainsworth, Information Technology Staff (ITS), Atlanta, GA, received a spot award for outstanding contribution to the GIPSA Application Modernization (GAM) project as the testing specialist for the Configuration Management team.

Frieda Achtentuch, ITS, Washington, DC, received a spot award for outstanding contribution to the GAM project as the project lead for the development and deployment phase of the GIPSA Website Redesign.

David Bowen, Office of Deputy Administrator, P&SP, Des Moines, received a spot award for outstanding contribution to the GAM project as the Project Manager for Bonds and Financial Instruments application.

James Cannon, auditor, Atlanta; **Carol Carter**, administrative assistant, Denver; **Desmond Coker**, program analyst and **Sheila Davis**, secretary, Regional Operations Division; **Terry Ryno**, resident agent, Springfield, MO; and **Peggy Smith**, supervisory management analyst, Office of the Deputy Administrator, received spot awards for their efforts in making the P&SP National Training Conference a success.

Karen Guagliardo, Field Management Division, Washington, DC, received a spot award for outstanding contribution to the GAM project as project manager for the two applications.

Robert Kayne, ITS, Washing-

ton, DC, received a spot award for outstanding contributions to the GAM project as the quality assurance analyst in support of testing for the Configuration Management team.

Diane Palecek, Field Management Division, received a spot award for outstanding contribution to the GAM project as project manager for the Inspection Data Warehouse.

Tracey Paugh, ITS, Washington, DC, received a spot award for outstanding contribution to the GAM project as the configuration management specialist and support to the database administrator for the Configuration Management team.

Steve Rigden, ITS, Washington, DC, received a spot award for outstanding contribution to the GAM project as the database administrator and systems engineer for the Configuration Management team.

Sharon Setzer, administrative officer, Denver, and **Gretchen Van Walbeek**, administrative assistant, Des Moines, received spot awards for graciously volunteering to provide support to their regional offices during the P&SP National Training Conference.

Jim Vanderwielen, Office of Deputy Administrator, P&SP, Des Moines, received a spot award for outstanding contributions to the GAM project. **Jim's** role as project manager for Regulated Entities and Registration, Bonds and Financial Instruments, and Organization and Personnel applications provided the leadership needed to make these projects successful.

Ellie Speelman to Retire

Ed Durgin, Washington, DC

As the year draws to a close, **Ellie Speelman**, grain marketing specialist, Office of International Affairs, has decided to retire and formally end her 17-year federal career on December 31, 2005.

In 1988, at the urging of her husband **Charlie**, **Ellie** joined him in a Civil Service preparatory course at a local community college. At the conclusion of the course, **Ellie** took a Civil Service exam (**Charlie** didn't), moved on with her career as a mortgage loan processor, and gave little thought to pursuing a career with the Federal government. Others had different ideas, however, and **Ellie** received a phone call from officials with the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) requesting that she come in for an interview. In reflecting on this somewhat happenstance start to her federal career, **Ellie** notes that she wasn't really excited about the request but decided to attend the interview anyway. A Federal career was born.

Ellie first began working for APHIS in Hyattsville, MD as a clerk typist. She was hired and enrolled in a program called "Operation Jumpstart." This program was designed to improve the quality of clerical support in APHIS and give new employees an incentive to remain with the agency. A component of the program involved details to other agencies, and **Ellie** was placed with **David Shipman's** staff in the Standards and Procedures Branch. **Ellie** graduated from Operation Jumpstart

in late 1988, and transferred to the FGIS Standards and Procedures Branch in early 1989. After approximately one month working in this capacity, **John Pitchford**, chief of



GIPSA bids fondest farewell to Ellie Speelman, who is retiring from the Office of International Affairs this month.

the FGIS International Monitoring Staff (IMS), received permission for **Ellie** to begin a 90-day detail with IMS. **Ellie** joined **John** and **Byron Reilly** at IMS and never returned to the Standards and Procedures Branch. A Federal career began to form.

Over the years, **Ellie** has participated in a number of details and assignments in order to more fully understand FGIS field activities. She spent a 2-week detail in the New Orleans field office where she performed clerical duties but also spent time at elevator worksites to observe and better understand the Agency's inspection and weighing activities. She also spent a couple of weeks in the

Baltimore field office, and at the request of **Pat LaCour**, then field office manager, worked for approximately 1 month as a grain weigher. A Federal career continued to re-form and take shape.

Ellie has also willingly participated in a number of memorable training activities. She completed the International Grains Program offered at Kansas State University and developed friendships with fellow participants that were rekindled as she managed a protein collaborative project with various flour mills throughout the world. She is also a graduate of the Women's Executive Leadership Program, and during her participation in this program, she was placed on detail assignments to the Farm Service Agency in Kansas City, the Foreign Agriculture Service (FAS) Office of Outreach and the National Transportation and Safety Board. A federal employee grows and learns.

As retirement approaches, **Ellie** notes that her fondest memories are associated with preparing travelers for international travel and the people she has worked with and met during her Federal career. And the stories she can share on both accounts! For example, there was the time she helped prepare **Sabri Gerguis**, League City field office, for a hastily-called trip to Africa.

*Continued, see **Ellie**,
on page 4.*

Ellie, from page 3.

As trip preparations were being finalized, **Ellie** waited for the Embassy from a country to be visited to process a needed visa. **Sabri** departed from Houston, and the FAS courier rushed from the Embassy to our office with his passport in hand. **Ellie** secured the passport, hailed a cab and headed to Dulles airport to meet **Sabri** as he transited through Washington. A handoff of the passport and other needed materials literally took place at the boarding gate as the final loading call was being made! And who says that working for the Federal government is routine and repetitive? Lasting and fond memories as a Federal career draws to close.

While assisting others with international travel has been a favorite job assignment, personal travel has been one of **Ellie's** passions as well. Vacation travels have taken **Ellie** and **Charlie** to 29 countries thus far, and they are eager to add to this list. Indeed, next October, **Ellie** and **Charlie** will be joined by two of their grandchildren as they fly to Sicily, Italy, to begin a 19-day trans-Atlantic cruise. Additional travels and volunteer activities are planned for retirement.

Ellie will be missed not only by her colleagues in the Office of International Affairs but by all those she has worked with and met during her years of USDA service. Need assistance with a project? Ask **Ellie** and you have a willing volunteer. Someone need a birthday, anniversary or sympathy card? **Ellie** has already started to circulate one. Gregarious, generous and gracious aptly describe our soon-to-be-retired colleague. We wish you the best in your retirement years **Ellie**. And perhaps we should also say THANKS to **Charlie** for encouraging you to attend that Civil Service prep course!

GIPSA Web Site to Get New Look

Dana Stewart, Washington, DC

The GIPSA public web site is about to get a new "look and feel" in compliance with Office of Management and Budget and Departmental requirements. The site will reflect a new style that is being used by many new government sites, including USDA.gov, and many new commercial sites. The layout gives people multiple ways to reach essentially the same content, making content as accessible as possible to the general public.

You can see our development site at <http://devweb.gipsa.usda.gov/GIPSA/webapp?area=home&subject=landing&topic=landing>. We are using this site to integrate content and navigation changes, and other improvements. As you click through the new site, some pages will take you to our current site, so there will be some back-and-forth as you navigate.

Please send any comments and suggestions for improvements to gipsa-webmaster@usda.gov. When sending your comments, please include the URL of the page you are referencing in your email.

Travel Bits & Pieces

Peggy Smith, Washington, DC

TDY and Local Travel. If local travel occurs within 3-5 days after TDY travel, the local travel can be included on the travel voucher, rather than completing an SF-1164 for the local travel. Please keep in mind that local travel (mileage, telephone, and/or miscellaneous expenses) that is not performed within 3-5 days after TDY travel must always be claimed via an SF-1164.

Transaction Fees. Duluth Travel is now charging transaction fees. Please ensure that you have proof of the fee (credit card statement or e-mail message from Duluth) before claiming the fee. When showing the fee on the travel voucher, please show it in Section C as part of the Transportation Cost. The transaction fee is not a miscellaneous expense.

Issuances

Terri Henry, Washington, D.C.

New Issuances

- FGIS Directive 9180.37 "Visual Inspections" dated October 24, 2005 (Distribution: A, C, E).

Please call **Terri Henry** at (202) 205-8281, Fax to (202) 690-2755, or e-mail to Terri.L.Henry@usda.gov if you have comments or suggestions.

2005 Review Branch Contributor Award

Jan Hart and the Review Branch Staff Members

Fifty FGIS field-based employees have volunteered to work on details with the Compliance Division's Review Branch. This year, 17 assisted during onsite compliance reviews that evaluated the operations of 3 FGIS field offices and suboffices, 3 States, and 21 private agencies.

The Review Branch recognizes each field-based reviewer individually for their contributions when they do the compliance review. We also recognize the persons contributing most to our program at year-end. As a group, we decided that **Phil Meachem and Roy Shepherd** will receive the annual "Review Branch Contributor Award."

2005 Review Branch Contributor Award Winners

Phil Meachem and Roy Shepherd

We thank all of the employees that participated in reviews this past year.

2005 REVIEW PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS

George Banks, ACG, New Orleans
Pamela Borque, clerk, Crowley
Jacky Clements, assistant manager, Stuttgart
Scott Cooley, QAS, Washington Federal/State
Alonzo Craighton, ACG, New Orleans
Susan Fall, QAS, Mineapolis
Danny Harpole, ACG, Jonesboro
Judy Johnston, office support assistant, Wichita
Vicki Kottke, office support assistant, Moscow
Sammie Lewis, ACG, Jonesboro
Roy Lyon, ACG, Wichita
Phil Meachem, QAS, Stuttgart
Max Peterson, ACG, Wichita
Amanda Roussel, shift supervisor, New Orleans
Roy Shepherd, shift supervisor, New Orleans
Mary Vick, ACG, Wichita
Gary Zella, QAS, Stuttgart

Administrator, *from page 1.*

After the surveys are collected and the results analyzed, you will receive a report summarizing GIPSA's organizational strengths and weaknesses, which will, in turn, be used to improve and enhance GIPSA's organizational effectiveness. The greater your participation in the survey, the more effective the process will be. The survey will provide a baseline to both see where we are and to help determine improvements that may be made by GIPSA. Subsequent survey results will be compared to the baseline data to determine if improvement efforts are working based on employee responses.

In conclusion, the holidays are a great time to show our appreciation for those around us — family, friends, and co-workers. My thanks to each of you for all you do for our agency and the customers we serve. And thank you for making me feel so welcome in the GIPSA family, for making my transition to DC go so smoothly, and for bearing with me as I embark on a huge learning curve.

Have a safe and happy holiday season!

Help is within reach.

For confidential assistance,
call your Employee
Assistance Program

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

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

Cell Phone Etiquette

How do you use your wireless phone in a way that is respectful of others? According to Jacqueline Whitmore, one of the nation's foremost experts on etiquette and protocol, wireless phone users can take these steps to avoid offending others:

- Let your voicemail take your calls when you're in meetings, courtrooms, restaurants and other busy areas. If you must speak to the caller, excuse yourself and find a secluded area where you can talk.
- Speak in your regular conversational tone. People tend to speak more loudly than normal on a wireless phone and often don't recognize how distracting they can be to others.
- Don't display anger during a public call.
- Conversations that are likely to be emotional should be held where they will not embarrass or intrude on others.
- Set the ringer on vibrate or turn off your phone in public places such as movie theaters, religious services, restaurants, etc. Many wireless phones now have environmental settings that automatically adjust the phone and its features so you do not disrupt your surroundings.
- If you are expecting a call that can't be postponed, alert your companions in advance and excuse yourself when the call comes in; the people you are with should take precedence over calls you want to make or receive.
- Avoid interrupting meetings, social gatherings or personal conversations by answering your wireless phone or checking your voicemail.
- Discreetly excuse yourself if you must take the call.
- Use discretion when discussing private matters or certain business topics in front of others. You never know who is within hearing range.
- Utilize text messaging for quick, discreet correspondence in meetings. Remember that the people in the room with you are your first priority, so ensure they have your undivided attention.
- Walkie-talkie technology such as Sprint PCS Ready Link provides a quick and efficient way to make a call. Use PCS Ready Link for brief conversations and turn off the speaker function in public venues. For lengthy chats, make a traditional PCS voice call - it's the same PCS phone number for both means of communication.
- Practice wireless responsibility while you are driving. Place calls when your vehicle is not moving. Don't make or answer calls while in heavy traffic or in hazardous driving conditions. Use a hands-free device to help focus attention on safety. Always make safety your most important call.

Source: <http://www2.sprint.com/mr/consumertopic.do?topicId=260>

Official Designations

GIPSA recently announced the following actions on designations to officially inspect and weigh grain in Minnesota.

Grain Inspection, Inc., MidIowa Grain Inspection, Inc., North Dakota Grain Inspection Service, Inc., Northern Plains Grain Inspection Service, Inc., D. R. Schaal Agency, Inc., Sioux City Inspection and Weighing Service Company, and State Grain Inspection, Inc. are designated for portions of Minnesota. Jamestown, Mid-Iowa, North Dakota, Northern Plains, Schaal, and Sioux City, all officially designated agencies, are designated effective January 1, 2006, concurrent with their present designations. State Grain is designated effective January 1, 2006, and terminating June 30, 2007.



*Season's Greetings
to you and yours,
and best wishes
for a
Happy New Year!*



For Your Health

Mavis Rogers, Washington, DC

The holidays bring joy and laughter to many, but it is important to recognize the potential dangers associated with holiday decorating and cooking.

- ✦ Never leave candles burning unattended even for a short period of time. Extinguish all candles before going to sleep or leaving a room or home.
- ✦ Never use lighted candles within three feet of a Christmas tree, other greenery, other decorations, or wrapping paper.
- ✦ Before using a ladder outdoors, choose a location that is well away from all power lines.
- ✦ Place the ladder on level ground, ensure all locks are engaged, face the ladder when climbing, make sure the rungs are dry, and wear slip resistant shoes.
- ✦ Keep your body centered on the ladder when climbing; stand at or below the highest safe standing level on the ladder. For step ladders, the safe standing level is the second rung from the top.
- ✦ Inspect holiday lights and extension cords before using. Replace any that are frayed or damaged.
- ✦ Follow the manufacturer's guidelines for stringing lights together.
- ✦ Unplug all holiday lights before going to sleep or leaving home.
- ✦ Do not overload extension cord or electrical receptacles.
- ✦ Never keep an extension cord plugged in when not in use.
- ✦ Never leave food cooking on the stove unattended, even for short periods of time.
- ✦ Check your smoke detectors monthly at a minimum. Never borrow batteries from smoke detectors for toys or appliances.

Courtesy: The City of Manassas Park in Northern Virginia

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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Washington, D.C. 20250-3614

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FAX (202) 690-2333
dana.b.stewart@usda.gov

by December 25, 2005!

**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

Regulatory Info

Tess Butler, Washington, DC

Federal Register Publications

- Designation for the State of Minnesota Area – Published November 23, 2005
- Review Inspection Requirements for Graded Commodities, Final Rule – Published November 15, 2005

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