



GIPSA *NEWS*

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE EMPLOYEES OF THE GRAIN
INSPECTION, PACKERS AND STOCKYARDS
ADMINISTRATION

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FGIS Matters...!

Randall Jones, Washington, DC

Happy New Year FGIS and greetings from the Office of the Deputy Administrator! We are just a few weeks now into the New Year and it has been cliff hanger thus far. Here in Washington DC the talks of the fiscal cliff have been at the forefront of most all discussions. Determining how best to manage within our budget while also progressing forward with initiatives and training needed to support the future delivery of our services has been the focus of the Executive Management Team. Each New Year brings promise, excitement and New Year's resolutions. This year my resolution is to identify innovative ideas that will allow FGIS to maintain our gold standard of service while also optimizing our cost to revenue generation.

FGIS is not in the business to make a profit with our user fees but in many ways we must operate like a business by keeping costs low and generate sufficient revenue to cover our costs in order to support the FGIS mission. To that end, on January 14, 2013, FGIS published in the Federal Register a Proposed Rule announcing the completion of an in-depth review of the Federal Grain Inspection Service trust fund which covers the costs of providing weighing and inspection services under the U.S. Grain Standards Act. As a result of the review, GIPSA is proposing to revise the regulations under the USGSA to adjust grain export fees. The detailed changes are on display at the Federal Register and can be viewed at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2013-01-14/html/2013-00455.htm>.

The fees were last amended in 2004 and are established to cover the costs to perform the services and were based in part on the projection that 80 million metric tons of grain would be exported utilizing FGIS services (excluding exports in delegated States like Washington) in League City, New Orleans, Portland, and Toledo. However, in only 2 years, 2008 and 2011, did exports reach or exceed this projection which resulted in significantly less revenue than anticipated. Unforeseen crop production problems resulted in substantially reduced grain exports in 2012 and for the first 3 months of 2013. Consequently, revenue has



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FGIS Matters...! *from cover page*

been substantially decreased as well as the operating reserve in the user fee fund which has been significantly drawn down. In order to maintain financial stability, the export user fees now need to be adjusted to assure continued inspection and weighing services to the grain industry which will further facilitate the sound and orderly marketing of grain in domestic and export markets.

The Proposed Rule recommends several changes to the fee schedule including an increase in the contract hourly rate to the grain industry by 5 percent in fiscal year 2013 and 2 percent per annum through fiscal year 2017. FGIS believes that proposing an initial fee increase in the first year of the new fee schedule followed by small annual incremental fees will mitigate the effects that a large one-time increase would have on customers. Regional fees based on export volume (tonnage fees) that provide revenue which supports the regional field offices will increase to account for reduced grain exports.

Through the years, FGIS has taken significant steps to diminish costs which have included reducing travel, reducing staff, scheduling part-time and intermittent employees during fluctuating work periods, and developing automated tools that provide administrative efficiencies. As we continue our efforts to create efficiencies and provide cost-effective high quality services, your ideas and innovations are welcome. I anticipate that over the year we will increasingly be asked to tighten our belt even further within the fiscal uncertainties of the coming year. As we do so, think about how we could do our business differently that will provide the same high quality result. Times change and we must constantly be vigilant and seek new ways to support our activities and provide services to our stakeholders. Your ideas and innovations are appreciated and welcomed. Feel free to provide to me or to the Change Control Working Group ideas you may have as to how we can deliver our services more efficiently. As we face this uncertainty, we face it together and we will find solutions together.

Until next time, keep up the good work and stay safe!

A Shout-Out Goes to...

- ◆ A thankful shout-out goes to **Michael Hearn**, **Gilbert Knight** and **Cheryl Taylor** from the League City Field Office for helping the Crowley Duty Point in their time of need!
- ◆ A timely shout-out goes to **Penelope K. Kilbride**, **Tim Johnson**, **Donna Ash**, **Sylvia Midgett**, **Tom Steele**, **Ty Luckey**, **Pamela Lake**, **Ron Metz**, **Gary McBryde**, **Kristen Pirtle**, **Tina Crane**, **Abhai Singh**, **Glenda Lasseigne**, **Martha J. Carver**, **Pamela Bourque**, **Marsha Schwartz**, **Jennifer Hill**, **Ana Alvarado**, **Deborah Edwards**, and **Lynn Thomas** for helping the Management and Budget Services staff collect documents for the Performance Appraisal Assessment Tool (PAAT). Thank you!
- ◆ An extraordinary shout-out goes to **Caroline Thorpe** for submitting important training information for GIPSA's Human Capital Management Report (HCMR).

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 Civil Rights Staff at 202-720-0216

Names in the News

Retirements



Happy Retirement!

Henry Jackson, Agriculture Commodity Grader, retired on November 30, 2012, with 34 years of federal service. Henry began his career with the Federal Government in the Jonesboro, Arkansas

Field Office in 1978 as a GS-4 Agriculture Commodity Technician and was later promoted to an Agriculture Commodity Grader. After a 6 month Reduction In Force (RIF) in 1983, Henry was reassigned to the Forest City, Arkansas, duty station working through the Stuttgart Field Office and promoted to a GS-9 before moving to the Memphis, Tennessee, duty station in 1986. He relocated to the West Memphis duty station in 1990 and then to the Crawfordsville, Arkansas, duty station where he was very instrumental in the commodity inspection program. Henry was reassigned one last time to the Jonesboro duty point in 2007 where he completed his 34 years of federal service. Henry was a great role model for all those that worked with him and will be remembered for always having a positive attitude and excellent work ethic. Henry has three daughters and four grandkids. He will spend his retirement fishing and traveling.

Vicki Kottke, Administrative Support Assistant, retired after 30 years of service to GIPSA at the Moscow, Idaho, location. Her retirement plan is to work on the 30 years of deferred projects on the 80+ acres she and her husband, Ed, own just outside of Moscow. She is looking forward to enjoying the sunshine and her garden!

Larry Freese, Statistician, retired on December 31, 2012, with 36 years of federal service. Larry is from Kearney, Missouri, and he graduated from Oklahoma State University in 1976 with a Master of Science degree in statistics. Following graduation, in 1976, he began his career with the Federal Government as a statistician with the Food and Nutrition Service in Washington, DC. In 1979,

he joined the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS). In 1980, in a cooperative agreement between AMS and the Federal Grain Inspection Service (FGIS) Larry relocated to the FGIS facility in Grandview, Missouri. At the time, the unit was known as the Inspection Methods and Research Division and later became the Technology and Science Division which is now located in Kansas City, Missouri. Larry was transferred from AMS to FGIS in 1996 where he remained until his retirement.

While with FGIS his duties were to provide statistical services on a wide range of research and quality control projects. Larry was also involved with the Codex Committee on Methods of Analysis and Sampling. The committee is an international organization that develops standards and guidelines for testing food in international trade with the purpose to protect consumers and facilitate international trade of food. Following retirement, Larry plans on spending time with his wife Vicki, son Asher and daughter Lindsay as well as catching up on home projects, traveling, and volunteering.

Art Boline, Agricultural Commodity Grader, retired on January 3, 2013, with almost 35 years of federal service. Art is from Duluth, Minnesota. He graduated from Michigan Tech University with a Bachelors of Science and Biology. Art began his career with the Federal Government in 1977. He was hired as an Agricultural Commodity Grader in The Duluth Field Office. Eventually Duluth was turned into a Sub-Office of the Minneapolis Field Office. In 2007, Duluth was made a duty point location of the Toledo Field Office. In 2008, Art became a Shift Supervisor for the Duluth duty point location of the Toledo Field Office. During Art's service he travelled extensively. He has been detailed to New Orleans's, Houston, Saginaw, several locations in Canada, and has worked for the International Affairs Division. Whatever jobs Art performed in his career he performed them with expertise and professionalism. In his retirement, Art plans to travel to China with his wife, ride bikes, kayak, and play more golf.

Condolences

Craig Johnson, former Wichita Field Office employee, passed away on January 24, 2013. Craig had also worked in the Grand Forks office. There will be a memorial service for Craig at the Resthaven Mortuary in Wichita on February 2, 2013, at 3:00 pm.

Kicking Off P&SP CCWG for 2013

Kari McPherson, Pierre, SD, and Marilyn Gallagher, Longview, TX

The Packers and Stockyards Program Change Control Working Group (CCWG) is ready to kick off another exciting year. We wanted to take this opportunity to introduce you to the new officers serving on the P&SP CCWG for 2013. They are your co-workers who are diligently working to serve the agency and you.

Sarah Childress is currently serving her second term as Chair of the CCWG. Sarah is a Marketing Specialist with the Western Regional Office (WRO). Sarah grew up on a cattle ranch and always knew she wanted to work in the agriculture industry. Sarah studied business and marketing during her undergrad and has a Master in Agribusiness. She and her husband run a small cow/calf operation. Sarah is in her fifth year with P&SP and third year of serving on the CCWG. Sarah has enjoyed being able to meet and work with others from across the agency as well as the opportunity to work with upper management. She also appreciates being able to learn about the processes and procedures of others who work for this agency. Sarah feels the CCWG is the best way that everyone can make changes that will improve our agency. Sarah says, "During my time on the team, I have been amazed by what great ideas are submitted to the CCWG. I look forward to serving on this team another year to see new ideas will be submitted to the team from people wanting to make a difference."

Wayne Basford is currently serving as the Vice-Chair for the CCWG. Wayne is an Investigative Attorney in the Eastern Regional Office (ERO) who joined the Packers and Stockyards Program in 2009, after practicing law for 25 years in Florida and Georgia. Wayne focused on protecting and enforcing the civil rights of persons with disabilities and others, criminal law, contracts, Social Security, guardianship, and wills and estates. He has tried more than 25 cases before juries and hundreds of cases before judges. His interest in agriculture began as a child as he spent time and worked on his uncle's farm. Wayne recalls his first experience with a P&SP issue when he was about 12 years old. Wayne's uncle returned from an auction market where he felt he was taken advantage of by buyers who were "taking turns" bidding on livestock. Wayne often thinks of his Uncle Charlie as a reminder of why our work is so important. Wayne lives with his wife and 12 year-old daughter in Woodstock, Georgia.

Kari McPherson is currently serving as Co-Reporter and is in her third year as a member of the CCWG and approaching five years with P&SP. Kari is a Resident Agent with the MRO and lives in Pierre, South Dakota. Growing up on a commercial cattle ranch near Sturgis, South Dakota, agriculture has always been important to Kari. Raising, showing, and selling cattle were a big part of her life and led her attending South Dakota State University and receiving a Bachelor of Science Degree in Animal Science. Kari views CCWG as a great way for everyone to voice their opinions on what they would like to see happen within the agency.

Stephanie Feinberg is serving as the Co-Recorder for CCWG. Stephanie grew up in the Washington, DC, area. She graduated with a Bachelors of Science degree in Animal and Poultry Science, has a business minor, and is currently in school for her Master in Business Administration at George Mason University. Stephanie started with GIPSA as an intern in the summer of 2010, and has been with the agency for almost three years now as a management analyst. As a member of CCWG, she believes that the CCWG is a great and innovative tool for the agency to funnel its ideas for progress and hopes to see it grow in the future.

Sarah, Wayne, Kari, Stephanie, and everyone in the CCWG are ready to hear from you. Submit a Change Request to have your voice heard within the agency!

Issuance Report

Terri Henry, Washington, DC

FGIS Program Notice 13-05, "National Export Soybean Sample Collection Plan" dated January 10, 2013

FGIS Directive 4735.2, Clothing and Identity Apparel Policy, dated January 17, 2013

Interviewing Tips

John B. Pitchford, Washington, DC



While I'm not trained on the subject of interviewing and I don't claim to be an expert, I have served on several panels over the last few years to either interview candidates for a position or score written applications for a developmental program. In doing so, I started to notice some common threads in terms of how the applicants could have improved their oral or written presentation to be more successful. I started to jot them down and decided to share them in hopes that they will help you when you pursue your next competitive application. Most of my tips are written in the context of an oral interview, but the same principles can apply to a written application.

1. **Listen to the question carefully, and answer it.** Chances are that the panelists will have a set of criteria the selecting official has asked them to listen for..."desirable responses," so to speak. Hitting on them will elevate your score. If you don't catch the entire question the first time, ask the panelist to repeat it. If you are asked for a specific example, don't give a general one. If you are asked to give examples of your experience with "x" and "y," don't speak only about "x" and not "y."
2. **Talk about you, not your team.** If you are asked to talk about your technical or leadership skills on a team project, talk about *your* skills, not just what the team project was or what you achieved as a group. If you catch yourself saying "we" and not "I," watch it. *You* are interviewing for the position, not the team. The panelists want to hear about *you* and what makes *you* stand out from the other applicants. Don't be cocky, but do talk about you and your skills and achievements.
3. **Organize your response.** If you are asked to describe a problem or conflict and what you did to resolve it, organize your response in a logical progression: define the *problem*, describe the *solution*, and then explain the *outcome* or *result*. Explain what strength or skill *you* had that made it all possible.
4. **It's about breadth, not depth.** If you are asked to describe your experience with a particular thing...for example, leading a team...it's better to talk about your role in leading several teams (these are teams I have led and this is what I did to lead them). Don't go into a lengthy and detailed explanation about a single team and what the team did.
5. **Be focused and concise.** Listen to the question and answer it completely, but be focused and concise. Give the background needed to put your response in context, but don't go into a lot of unnecessary detail. Once again, the panel will be listening for what *you* did to demonstrate a specific competence.
6. **Make your application easy on the eyes.** Don't reduce font size, increase margin width, and avoid using paragraphs to fit more words on the page. If you have the urge to do so, re-read tip #5 and edit with a sharp pencil. If the panelist looks at a page of typing and says "ugh" before reading the first word, that's not a good sign. The page should look refreshing. And by the way, apply a zero tolerance for spelling and grammar errors.
7. **Give examples from professional and personal experiences.** If it is a "behavioral event" interview style (the panelists probably will say so before or at the beginning), they will be looking for experiences you have had in your lifetime that demonstrate your strengths with the relevant competencies. Feel free to use examples of your experiences outside the workplace; for example, experiences with friends or family members, in your community, or with outside organizations. Personally, I find it refreshing and more interesting when an applicant draws from experiences outside of work. If you want to learn more about this interviewing style, I just googled "behavioral event interview" and got several hits for study guides.

There you have it; just advice from someone who's been on a lot of panels and who's seen who the successful applicants have been. Take 'em or leave 'em, but get out there and **knock their socks off!**

Favorite Books in the Lending Library

Caroline Thorpe, Washington, DC

So you want to be a leader! The books in the Lending Library have some major best sellers and all you have to do is send an e-mail to the Training Office, either caroline.c.thorpe@usda.gov or susan.m.martin@usda.gov, and have them FedExed at no cost to your office. Favorites include:

- ◆ **It's Your Ship by Captian Michael Abrashoff:** This book addresses major areas of leadership, such as personal style (leading by example), communication (listen aggressively and communicate purpose), organizational (trust, results, risks, and procedures), and social (building people up, unity and work quality of live). That said this book is so loaded with practical simple ideas and the author incorporates all these skill areas by using stories.
- ◆ **8 Habits of the Heart by Clifton Taulbert:** Eight Habits of the Heart grew out of a commencement speech that Taulbert delivered. Taulbert illustrated the community building practices that he learned from friends and family in the Mississippi Delta. He realized that if we all practiced those same acts of kindness-- habits of the heart-- would we build a strong community for ourselves and future generations. With personal stories, Clifton Taulbert illustrates each habit and shows readers how to embrace these values that support community.
- ◆ **First Break All the Rules by Markus Buckingham and Curt Coffman:** The authors identify business management rules "held sacred by conventional wisdom" and challenge leadership "common sense." They base their observations on survey data from 80,000 interviews with leadership that includes both government and private sector organizations. Specifically, great leaders need to focus more on employee talent, work outcomes, strengths, job fit, and performance. This does not mean to totally ignore common personnel measures of seniority, training, rules, steps, but these will never be the real drivers of great performance. They recommend focusing on observed employee strengths and finding ways to deemphasize weaknesses to help place staff in the right position and ensure real performance. This opens the door to what is possible and helps envision an effective work environment that is proactive.
- ◆ **Fish! A Remarkable Way to Boost Morale and Improve Results by Harry Paul:** This book shows how to come up with a vision for your business and how to keep it alive, vital, and renewed through tough times, such as turnover in management and staff or a troubled economy. Using the example of a hugely successful, fictional sushi restaurant as a model for a vision of continual renewal, Fish! Fish! illustrates three major principals of continued success: Commit, Be it, and Coach it.

Mandatory Training Update

CYBER SECURITY 2013

3/31/2013

PATHWAYS

2/5/2013

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION

2/15/2013

WORKPLACE HARRASSMENT

9/31/2013



Need to change something other than your socks?



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Please send your suggestions or ideas to GIPSA-Ideas@usda.gov; fax them to 202-690-2173; or telephone them to 1-800-455-3447 or 202-720-7045. It is best to send them via fax or email to reduce the possibility of transcription errors; however, ideas will be accepted regardless of the method of transmission.

GIPSA News is the employee newsletter of the USDA Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration. Send your news, ideas, suggestions, comments, questions, or thoughts for the next issue to:

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