

**DIRECTOR'S
CORNER**



**Veggies Matter:
HRD Participates in Gleaning
to Bolster FFF Contribution**

By Martin Welles

Dipping into a double-wide agricultural bin of sweet potatoes and stuffing sacks to help feed the hungry was all part of the MRPBS, Human Resources Division (HRD) Feds Feed Families (FFF) gleaning effort at the Mid-Atlantic Gleaning Warehouse in Cheltenham, MD on Wednesday, July 23, 2014.

“Sweet potatoes were kind of fun,” says LR Specialist Lori Ittner, “but the green beans were another matter.”

A group of 10 volunteers, including Human Resources Director Marsha Wiggins and Deputy Director Amy Johnson, were up to their elbows (literally) in zucchini, green beans, sweet potatoes, and avocados during the day. They worked so hard and furious that the warehouse staff could not keep up with staging the produce. While the tally for the day has not yet been provided, FFF HRD coordinator Marty Welles estimates that 10,000 pounds of food were processed by HRD during the outing. USDA will get credit for all the food processed on July 23, 2014 – even the food processed by other charities that were present but not participating in the FFF. “The FFF gleaning effort is not easy work, but the contribution it makes to the FFF is overwhelming,” says HRD Deputy Director Amy Johnson. HRD had a second gleaning day on August 22, 2014. Other groups are invited to participate and make their own arrangements any Monday, Wednesday, or Friday during the FFF campaign. For more information contact Marty Welles at martin.r.welles@aphis.usda.gov or at (202) 799-7084.



Sacks of green beans are transferred from the farm bins into sacks for distribution to food pantries and soup kitchens throughout the Washington DC Metro Area. Pictured clockwise (l.-r.) Amy Johnson, Marsha Wiggins, Christine Ellis, Geeriee Lewis, Cynthia Laurent, Lori Ittner. Photo by Marty Welles



Geeriee Lewis and Amy Johnson, with the help of the HRD team, processed four bins of green beans, two bins of zucchini, two double-wide bins of sweet potatoes, and two pallets of avocados. Photo by Marty Welles

Inside this Issue:

HR Info	1
Meet HR	2
Policy	3-5
Leave & Comp	5
Processing	6-8
Benefits	9
APHIS Training	9



We hope that the HR Broadcast is meeting your needs and communicating topics of interest, but if there are items you would like to see included in future issues, please contact our HR Broadcast Layout Editor, Christina Furnkranz, at Christina.S.Furnkranz@aphis.usda.gov

**MEET
HR**

NEW

“MEET HR” is a new feature in the HR Quarterly Broadcast. We hope you find it helpful in learning about the variety of work carried out in HRD and the staff members who provide services to you.

This month’s HRD staff spotlight is on the **Systems and Reporting Branch**. The staff of seven employees is responsible for implementing and managing HR systems, retrieving data and providing reports on behalf of the Mission Area. In addition, the staff provides workforce planning and visual graphic support to MRP customers. The staff is currently working on the implementation of all the HR systems that comprise the ONE USDA HR enterprise solution project - a department-wide initiative to improve mission delivery through the deployment of integrated workforce technology systems that facilitate strategic and advisory HR service delivery and streamline HR transaction processing. These systems will bring forth some changes for HR and customers, but will ultimately allow MRP to utilize standard HR applications across the USDA. One of these changes is outlined in the article on page 6 - Personnel Action/Paperwork Submission Timeframes Are Changing.

The Systems & Reporting Branch or SRB provides customers with standard and ad-hoc reports in addition to reports for annual USDA and Office of Personnel Management requirements. The staff also serves as NFC Security Officers for APHIS customers needing access to NFC or the Reporting Center. If you are seeking an ad-hoc report, please submit a request to HR.data@aphis.usda.gov. If you are an APHIS employee and need access to NFC/Reporting Center, please contact HR.system.access@aphis.usda.gov.

The team members on the Systems and Reporting Branch look forward to working with you!

**Nancy Bradford * Patricia Flower * Christina Furnkranz * Darcy Long
Stephanie Nelson * Kathy Slaga * Nancy Varichak**

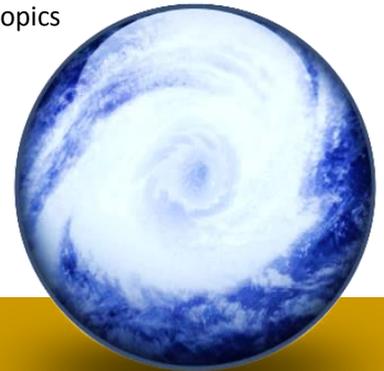




When Weather Disasters Strike...

By *Nella Roberts* (Nella.Roberts@aphis.usda.gov, 301-851-2910)

When weather disasters strike, it is important to know what assistance and resources are available through USDA. MRPBS has put together a fact sheet entitled "Flexibilities for Employees affected by Weather and Other Emergencies." It contains useful guidance on topics such as administrative leave, the Emergency Leave Transfer Program (ELTP), and housing.



Before disaster strikes, be prepared by checking it out on the web at:
http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/hr/downloads/FACT_SHEET_Assistance_Available_During_Emergencies.pdf

Latest Update to Human Resources Desk Guide Subchapter 4630, Absence and Leave

By *Nella Roberts* (Nella.Roberts@aphis.usda.gov, 301-851-2910)

The Human Resources Desk Guide (HRDG) Subchapter 4630 addressing Emergencies (Weather and Other) has been updated to clarify the ability to grant 2 hours of administrative leave to teleworkers during Federal office closures (Section D, Subsection b.) This, and all weather announcements and their interpretations, are to be used by all MRP offices for weather-related dismissals and closures.

See the announcements at:
<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wps/portal/aphis/ourfocus/business-services?1dmy&urile=wcm%3apath%3a%2Faphis+content+library%2Fsa+our+focus%2Fsa+business+services%2Fsa+publications%2Fsa+hr+desk+guide%2Fsa+hrdg+4630%2Fct+4630+sub+d+sec+b#washington>



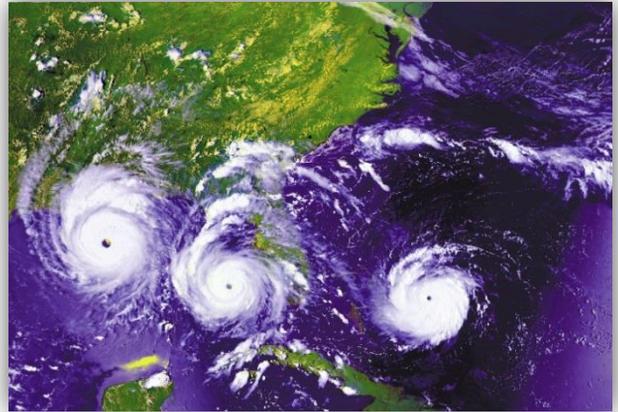
Persons with disabilities who need program information in alternate formats (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY).



Guidance for Weather Emergencies

By **Tara Coker** (Tara.Coker@aphis.usda.gov, 301-851-2883)
and **Nella Roberts** (Nella.Roberts@aphis.usda.gov, 301-851-2910)

Hurricane season has arrived in the southeast while in other areas of the country it is tornadoes or wildfires. No matter what the weather emergency, it is important to be prepared to continue to carry out the Agency's mission. Being prepared means knowing what the emergency weather announcements, such as "Federal Offices are OPEN under Unscheduled Leave / Unscheduled Telework" or "Federal Offices are CLOSED to the Public," mean and how they apply to you. For MRP employees, a "Federal Offices are **OPEN** under Unscheduled Leave / Unscheduled Telework" announcement means that you may either take leave or telework instead of reporting to the office. This type of announcement covers employees who do not telework on a regular basis. However, if you opt for unscheduled telework and your power goes out, you must either report to the office or take leave for the remainder of your workday.



An announcement of "Federal Offices are **CLOSED** to the Public" means that all employees who have approved telework agreements must telework. This includes regularly scheduled telework, ad hoc telework, etc. In these cases, employees will receive 2 hours of administrative leave on the day of the closure to take care of personal needs related to the closure, such as pumping water from flooded areas, etc. The leave may be taken at any time during the day. If the office is closed and your power goes out while teleworking, you will be granted administrative leave. However, if your power returns during your regularly scheduled workday, you are required to resume work.



In either of the above scenarios, please adhere to the following:

- Contact your supervisor to advise that you are safe;
 - Inform your supervisor of your choice to telework or take leave;
 - Ensure you have your laptop and any other necessary equipment, paperwork, etc. at home with you. If you are out of the office, e.g., on leave or it is your day off prior to one of the above announcements, you may need to go to the office to pick up your equipment so that you can telework when bad weather is affecting your area.
- If you are not prepared to telework, i.e., you do not have your laptop or other necessary equipment or supplies, you must take leave. This includes situations where you have elder care or child care responsibilities. If your child is small and cannot care for him/herself, you may not telework; you must take leave. With supervisory approval, a personal computer may be used to complete AgLearn courses or other web-based programs that are not accessed through the APHIS network.

For more information about operations during a weather-related emergency, either within the DC metro area or in the field please see: http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wps/portal/aphis/ourfocus/business-services?1dmy&urile=wcm%3apath%3a%2Faphis_content_library%2Fsa_our_focus%2Fsa_business_services%2Fsa_publications%2Fsa_hr_desk_guide%2Fsa_hrdg_4630%2Fct_4630_sub_d_sec_b#who





FY 2014 Performance Cycle Ends Soon

By **Gwen Montgomery** (Gwen.Montgomery@aphis.usda.gov, 301-851-2928)

The FY2014 performance cycle ends on **September 30, 2014**. Managers and supervisors are required to conduct performance evaluations for all eligible employees. Performance evaluations must be completed within 30 days of the end of the cycle (**October 30**). To assist in completing the evaluations, employees are urged to begin preparing their end-of-the-year accomplishment reports and submit them to their supervisors prior to the end of the performance cycle.

Supervisors are reminded, per the USDA Performance Management Directive, the Mission Results and Supervision elements must be valued at 4 appraisal units each. Please note this when computing point totals on the AD-435 rating sheet to determine final ratings.

All signed performance appraisals (first page of AD-435) must be submitted to HR Processing by **November 14, 2014** for input into the NFC database. Timely submission of signed performance appraisals will ensure MRP compliance with the Department's increased accountability requirements for performance management. For questions, please contact Gwen Montgomery at (301) 851-2928 or via email at Gwen.Montgomery@aphis.usda.gov.



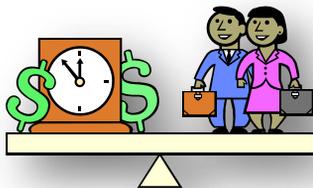
Scheduling Use or Lose Annual Leave

By **Nella Roberts** (Nella.Roberts@aphis.usda.gov, 301-851-2910)

While the end of the leave year is not yet here, it is fast approaching! Now is the time to plan ahead and schedule your use/lose annual leave. The 2014 leave year ends January 10, 2015 (pay period 26). Use or lose annual leave must be scheduled by November 29, 2014, which is the end of pay period 23. While the leave must be scheduled by the end of pay period 23, you have until the end of pay period 26 to use it. This means that the leave must either be scheduled electronically, i.e., through email or WebTA, or in writing, e.g., a memo or OPM Form 71. If the leave is not properly scheduled and it is lost at the end of the leave year, it cannot be considered for restoration because it did not meet the scheduling requirement.



So, when planning your summer vacation, pay particular attention to your leave balances. Remember to work closely with your supervisor to schedule and use any use/lose annual leave. And lastly, if you have any questions, contact your servicing Leave and Compensation Team Specialist or Nella Roberts (contact information above.)



Personnel Action/Paperwork Submission Timeframes Are Changing

By **Mavis Harrison** (Mavis.Harrison@aphis.usda.gov, 612-336-3319)



In an effort to ensure that your personnel actions are processed efficiently and accurately and to enable new employees to gain quicker access to Agency systems via eAuthorization and LincPass, the time frames for submitting Requests for Personnel Action (Form SF-52) are changing.

What Does This Mean For You?

This means that all personnel actions, along with any associated paperwork, must be submitted to the MRP Human Resources Operations office a *minimum* of two weeks prior to the desired employee start date. For example, if the requested effective date of an action is Sunday, October 5, 2014, all paperwork, including the SF-52, need to arrive in HR Operations in Minneapolis no later than Friday, September 19, 2014. This is particularly important for appointments of new, or transferring, employees who need access to eAuthorization and an active LincPass. Early arrival of new appointment paperwork will allow for earlier entry of actions into the payroll/personnel system, thus starting the both the eAuthorization and the LincPass credentialing processes. This applies to all hires, including those made through field-delegated hiring authorities. For information and guidance on 'new appointment' paperwork covered by this change, please see the accompanying list.

All personnel actions are covered by the new submission timeframes, though it is understood that some paperwork associated with employee separation cannot be submitted until the employee departs. In those cases, paperwork should be submitted as quickly as possible for appropriate processing.

What's Next?

This change in submission standards will start with actions to be effected Sunday, October 5, 2014; as a result, personnel actions with effective dates proposed for October 5, along with the associated paperwork, need to be in HR no later than Friday, September 19, 2014. We understand this is a change from long-accepted submission times, but this change will be a significant benefit to the Agency over time. Questions can be directed to either Mavis Harrison (612-336-3319) or Steve Crescini (612-336-3285) in the Minneapolis operations office.



Continue to page 7 "Personnel Action/Paperwork Submission-Timeframes Are Changing"...



Continued from page 6 "Personnel Action/Paperwork Submission-Timeframes Are Changing"



Forms and submission guidelines

- The following forms for all new hire appointments and transfers, should be submitted a *minimum* of **30 days** prior to the proposed start date:
 - SF-52, Request for Personnel Action (for L/A or other non-competitive actions)
 - Application/OF-612/Resume (for L/A or other non-competitive appointments)
 - OF-306, Declaration of Federal Employment (with selectee/applicant signature in block 17A)
 - Service Agreements, such as Mobility, Seasonal, Pathways
 - Copy of Unofficial Transcripts (if required for the position)
 - Required Training Agreements
 - Proof of applicant drug test clearance (if required for position)
 - Signed approval for a recruitment or relocation incentive (if applicable)
 - Signed approval for an appointment above the minimum rate under the Superior Qualifications and Special Needs pay setting authority (if applicable)
- The following form must be received in HR Operations 30 days before a start date can be confirmed for employees transferring from another Agency:
 - Form SF-75 (Request for Preliminary Employment Data)
- In addition to the forms above, the following forms for new appointments, or transfers, should be submitted a *minimum* of **two weeks** prior to an employee starting work:
 - AD-349, Employee Address
 - SF-1199A, Direct Deposit Sign Up Form
 - W-4 (Federal), State tax, City tax form (if provided)
 - Employees working in Washington DC, but living in Maryland or Virginia need to submit a waiver of DC tax and tax forms for the state in which they reside.
 - SF-256, Self-Identification of Medical Disability
 - SF-181, Race and National Origin Identification
 - These forms MAY be required for submission a minimum of two weeks prior to an employee starting work, depending on the position being filled and/or the person selected:
 - Original Official Transcripts (if required for the position)
 - DD-214, Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty and/or
 - SF-15, Application for 10-point Veteran Preference, if applicable
 - HRO-127, Inquiry for Positions Requiring Possession of Firearms, if required
 - MRP-5, Self-Certification Medical Statement (if required)
 - OF-178, Certificate of Medical Examination (if required)
- The following forms will be completed by the employee on their first day and **must be submitted to the servicing HR assistant in Processing on an employee's first day:**
 - SF-61, Appointment Affidavits
 - OF-306, Declaration for Federal Employment (with necessary updates and *selectee signature in block 17B*)
 - I-9, Employment Eligibility Verification
 - AD-1197, Request for a USDA Identification Badge
 - HRO-1197, Background Investigation Supplement Form
 - SF-87, Fingerprint cards



eOPF Registration Process

By **Laura Frantes** (Laura.L.Frantes@aphis.usda.gov, 612-336-3548)



What is the Electronic Official Personnel Folder (e-OPF)?

The e-OPF is a secure, electronic, records-management system that contains the employee personnel records previously maintained in the Official Personnel Folder. The eOPF includes important documents such as your SF 50, Notification of Personnel Action; Designation of Beneficiary forms; and health and life insurance elections. To gain access to your forms and personnel information, you will need to register for access to your eOPF. The instructions below outline the registration process.

Before registering for your eOPF, you must first have an eAuthentication (eAUTH) ID and password

- If you are a new employee you will receive a registration email.
 1. Open the registration email. This email was sent to the email address that you provided to your Agency Registration Lead (ARL).
 2. Click on the link in the email. This link will open your browser window and navigate to the "Activate Your Employee Account" page.
 3. Input the information requested.
 4. Follow the remaining steps as instructed.
- If you are already a USDA employee but need to register for an eAUTH account:
 1. Contact an ARL for your agency. Click on the link below to display a list of ARLs.
<https://www.eauth.usda.gov/MainPages/AgencyRegistrationLeads.aspx>
 2. Provide the ARL with an email address. The ARL will confirm your email address, or if none exists, you will need to provide a valid personal or Government-issued email address.
 3. It may take up to 24 hours for the registration email to arrive. If you do not receive the Registration email, check your "junk" folder, as some email applications may incorrectly place this email there. Click [here](#) to review Frequently Asked Questions.
 4. Follow the steps under "New USDA Employees" above.



Once you have your eAUTH account, you may register for eOPF

1. You will need a copy of your most recent SF-50, Notification of Personnel Action, for your organizational code and Personnel Office Identifier (POI), **or**:
2. Contact the MRPBS eOPF help desk at: eopfmrp@aphis.usda.gov to request this information.

Register for your eOPF!!

1. Type this web address <https://eopf.nbc.gov/landing/> into Microsoft Internet Explorer. You must include the last / on the above web address.
2. Follow the online instructions.
3. For step-by-step guidance see the illustrated guide at:
http://inside.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/systems/eopf/downloads/eOPF_Registration_eAuthentication.pdf

eOPF Document Questions?

- HRD Processing Associate:
http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/contact_us/downloads/processing_prog_assignments.pdf

Access and Login Assistance?

- email:
aphisremedy@aphis.usda.gov

Another Person's Info in Your Folder?

- email:
eopfmrp@aphis.usda.gov



Introducing FERS RAE and FERS FRAE What Does it Mean To You?

By **Barb Watry** (Barbara.J.Watry@aphis.usda.gov, 612-336-3301)



Recently, there was a new term added to the retirement coverage family. Currently, we have several retirement systems for employees depending upon the start of their employment. We use the term ‘CSRS employees’ if an employee is covered by the Civil Service Retirement System. We use ‘FERS employees’ if covered by the Federal Employees Retirement System. Effective January 1, 2013, newly hired employees were called FERS RAE, or FERS Revised Annuity Employees. Employees hired on or after January 1, 2014, are referred to as FERS FRAE, or FERS Further Revised Annuity Employees. Although their annuity calculations will remain the same as a FERS employee, FERS RAE employees will contribute 3.1% of their salary to FERS and FERS FRAE employees will contribute 4.4% of their salary to FERS.

So, how does this affect you? Honestly, it probably won’t affect you at all. If you were employed in a position in which you contributed towards CSRS, CSRS Offset or FERS, or in a position in which your employment could potentially be creditable on December 31, 2012, nothing will change. Your coverage and contributions will remain the same. If you were on leave without pay on December 31, 2012, your retirement coverage will remain the same upon your return to duty.

If you were not employed in a retirement-covered position on December 31, 2012, but will be looking at an appointment in the future, you may be covered under the FERS RAE rules, depending on the length and type of your previous Federal service.

The same holds true for employees who were employed in a covered or potentially covered appointment on December 31, 2013. Nothing will change for you and your coverage while your contributions will remain the same. If you were employed on or after January 1, 2014, you may be covered under the FERS FRAE rules, depending on the length and type of your previous Federal service.

If you would like more information on FERS RAE or FERS FRAE, please contact the Benefits Specialist for your program: http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpb/contact_us/downloads/benefits.pdf

REMINDER

APHIS is now using AgLearn to record compliance with the APHIS Directive that all experienced supervisors, managers, and executives must complete 24 hours of continual learning each fiscal year. You can find more information, including the policy and ways you can meet the annual learning requirement by clicking here, [APHIS 4315](#), for more information.



If you have not yet certified completion this fiscal year (FY2014), plan on doing so by September 30, 2014. Click on the **APHIS-4315-FY 2014** item in your AgLearn To-Do List for the simple and brief process to certify.

