Welcome!

In addition to our semi-annual Newsletter, we now have a new brochure. Please contact your location council member for a copy. Also, don't forget to visit our website at http://msa.ars.usda.gov/osp/index.htm.

New Office Professionals:

Vicki Cooley, Cotton Structure & Quality Research Unit, SRRC, New Orleans, LA
Stacye Harrison, Southern Weed Science Research Unit, Stoneville, MS
Tarquisha Mumford, Catfish Genetics Research Unit, Stoneville, MS
Charlene Simmons, Administrative Office, SRRC, New Orleans, LA

Congratulations:

To the winners of the MSA Office Professionals of the Year: Janell Becker (GS-06 and above), Program Assistant, Food and Feed Safety Research Unit, New Orleans, Louisiana, and Edye LaBarre (GS-05 and below), Office Automation Assistant, Crop Genetics and Production Research Unit, Stoneville, MS.

Standard Operating Procedure:

Revised Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) soon will be added to our website (see address above). With assistance from Area Section Heads, council members are updating

each chapter with the latest rules and regulations regarding Correspondence, Files Retention and Disposition, Financial, PCMS, Personnel, Property, RPES, Cooperative Agreements, and Travel. Other useful information such as acronyms and commonly misused words will also be included. *(Submitted by Sandra Hineman)*

Mid South Area Continues to Grow:

Bowling Green, Kentucky, is the newest location in the Mid South Area. From their humble beginnings in the basement offices on loan from Western Kentucky University, the Animal Waste Management Research Unit (AWMRU) is now housed in three modular buildings with one more to be placed soon. Plans are to construct a new permanent building in 2 to 5 years. At the present time, the location has 13 employees with 2 located at Mississippi State, Mississippi. AWMRU works in cooperation with Western Kentucky University and Alabama A&M University. *(submitted by Kay Bolen)*

Did You Know?

Federal Law requires that e-mail and electronic calendar records be managed in accordance with the General Records Schedule (GRS) and/or the applicable ITA Records Control Schedule (RCS) issued by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). **Records in electronic format should be treated the**

same as records in hard copy format for retention purposes. Many of us read the e-mail and then leave it to be later deleted according to the settings in our mailbox in Groupwise. To check your settings, open Groupwise. In the menu line, click on Tools, Options, Environment, and then click on the tab labeled Cleanup. At this point, you view/change the settings related to deleting messages, tasks, calendars, etc. The following steps will ensure that e-mail and electronic calendar records are managed properly.

1. E-mail and electronic calendar records are considered to be official records if they meet any of the following criteria:

- Records were made or received by an agency of the United States Government under Federal law or in connection with the transaction of public business;
- Records are appropriate for preservation by that agency or its legitimate successor;
- Records provide evidence of the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of the Government; or
- Records contain valuable information.

2. Apply common sense test, if you are unsure about the above criteria. Ask yourself the question, "Would I have retained this record if I had received it in paper copy form?" The same test applies to an electronic copy.

3. Save those records determined to be official by either: printing out hard copies and filing them in the appropriate subject files; or saving them in electronic format to appropriate directories on the "C" or "home" drive. When printing or saving official records, it is necessary to also print or save essential transmission data (e.g., who sent the message, the addressees and any other recipients and when it was sent). You can also create directories in your Groupwise mailbox.

4. The period of retention for e-mail messages and calendars is governed by the records control schedule. Those e-mail messages and calendar entries not considered official records may be deleted when no longer needed. *(Submitted by Marlene Coley)*

Software Info:

Adobe Acrobat Reader and Adobe Acrobat 6.0, just what are these programs good for?

First of all if you do not have Adobe Acrobat Reader installed on your computer, then it is highly recommended that you have your computer IT personnel install this *freeware* onto your computer. *(Adobe Acrobat Reader is not needed if you already have the full Adobe program.)* Many communications are now being sent as .pdf files and can be read by *Adobe Acrobat Reader*. If you need to get this program, please visit http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html. Again, "This is a free product." The reader program is needed by anyone who is doing travel in the NFC system as the print files are sent as .pdf.

What is .pdf? The tag, ".pdf" means that the file is in "portable document format." When the file is opened, it looks like it was scanned and saved to the computer. The *Adobe Reader* is the program that opens the .pdf file, and once opened, it can be printed. Please note that the file has been saved and cannot be edited or altered using *Adobe Reader*.

Another program that is very helpful to use and will allow persons to create a ".pdf" file, is *Adobe Acrobat 6.0*. Creating a .pdf file is very easy using this program. This program will read the .pdf files as well as allow you to create .pdf files. To make the file you are working on a .pdf file, go to **F**ile, **P**rint, select **Adobe PDF** (or if you are using an older version of Adobe, select **acrobat distiller**). Once this is selected and you select OK, the computer will ask for a name for the file. The "tag" should always be .pdf. If you save it as a different tag, then you might experience

problems when trying to open or read the file. Once the program has been executed, the new file will open up in a new window. Once you look at the file, you can decide whether or not it is the way you want it to look. If you do not like what you see, you can delete it and start all over again. Remember that if you see a correction that has to be made, you will have to edit it in the word processor you created it in and then reprint it to the appropriate printer.

Next newsletter, more tips on using *Adobe 6.0. (Submitted by Lucienne Savell)*

Helpful Web-Sites:

Appropriation Bills Status:
http://thomas.loc.gov/

ARIS Manual:
http://www.npstaff.ars.usda.gov/ARIS/Manual

ARS Home Page: www.ars.usda.gov

ARS Information Staff:
http://www.ars.usda.gov/is/services

Disclaimers and Statements (ARS):
http://www.ars.usda.gov/disclaim.html

Domestic Per Diem Rates:
http://policyworks.gov/org/main/mt/
homepage/mtt/perdiem/travel.htm

Electronic Forms (old informs):
http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/forms/new-formlst.htm

Ethics:
http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/ethics

Foreign Per Diem Rates:
http://www.state.gov/m/a/als/prdm/2004

GSA Advantage:
http://www.gsaadvantage.gov

Human Resources Division:
http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/index.htm

IRS: http://www.irg.gov

NFC: http://www.nfc.usda.gov

OPM Home Page: http://www.opm.gov

OPM Forms:
http://www.opm.gov/forms/html/sf.asp

OSQR:
http://www.ars.usda.gov/research/docs.htm?docid=1286

Pay Tables:
http://www.opm.gov/oca/04tables/indexSES.asp.

PCMS:
http://www.usda.gov/procurement/card/index/html

Postal Rates:
http://www.usps.com/common/category/postage.htm

REE Administrative Issuances:
http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/ppweb

REE Directory:
http://isbprod.ars.usda.gov/dir2/viewemp$.startup

RPES: http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/rpes

Social Security: http://www.ssa.gov

State Tax Letters:
http://apps.fss.gsa.gov/services/gsa-smartpay/taxletter

Telephone Directory:
http://switchboard.com

Thrift Savings Plan: http://www.tsp.gov

TSP Election Form (TSP-1):
http://tsp.gov/cgi-bin/byteserver.cgi/forms/tsp-1.pdf

Unicor: http://www.unicor.gov

Vehicle Purchases (GSA):
http://www.gsa.gov/Portal/gsa/ep/content

World Clock - Times Zones:
http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock

Zip Code Lookup:
http://zip4.usps.com/zip4/welcome.jsp
(Submitted by Linda Fulton)

ARIS Helpful Hint:

Do you ever have a Scientist ask you for a list of their ARS-115's? Maybe they want to know which ones still need publication dates and citations. For those of you that are not aware of the "Author Report" feature in ARIS, it is a great tool. Just log into ARIS and select:
1) Research Documentation
2) Reports
3) 115 Author Reports
4) Pull up Authors name (query "?")
5) Query (this should pull up all the 115's entered in the last five years for the Author or you can also list a specific time period in the "approval date" field).*Note* - if you query under your location's mode code, you will only pull up a listing of the Author's 115's that were entered at your location. However, since many scientists co-author papers with other ARS scientists, you may want to query without the mode code in order to pull up 115's that may have been entered at other locations.
6) Action
7) Mark All Records
8) Reports (there are several choices; the following are the most helpful:
–Detail by Author (gives a list of all ARS-115's with all pertinent information)
–Detail by Author - Missing Citation (this is

very useful because it only lists ARS-115's that need citation information; periodically print out this list for each SY so they can check for any 115 publication information, this is especially important during Annual Report time.)
–Detail by Author - Citation (list of all ARS-115's including the citations) *(Submitted by Tammy Dorman)*

How to Get Direction From Your Supervisor in Prioritizing Your Work:

In the book *Productivity Power* by Jim Temme there are many suggestions on how to increase your productivity. One suggestion the author gives is clearly stating what you can't do right now. I know you are thinking that if I said that I won't have a job tomorrow! What one needs to remember is the **USA** method to saying no when you feel overloaded. Here is the **USA** way to say "I can't do that right now."

Understanding statement: "I know this new project you want me to do is significant."

Situation: "I'm working on project A, project B, and project C."

Action: "I would appreciate your assistance in helping me schedule this new project in relation to the other three. How will this new project fit in?"

What you have helped your supervisor do is look at life from your perspective. What you are asking your supervisor to do is:

- Take action – help you to decide how best to schedule the new project in relation to the rest of your work.
- Take responsibility – to provide you

direction.

- Consider reassigning the task to someone who may not be as busy.
- Communicate with you so you understand his or her perspective.

If you ask your supervisor, "Which of these projects/activities/tasks is more important?" you might hear:

- They are all important.
- Just get them all done.
- You decide. That's what I pay you to do.
- I am too busy to help you right now.

None of these answers are helpful. They give you no direction. Supervisors are often just as overloaded as you. They are not being difficult on purpose. They are looking at life from their own perspective. They are in a hurry to get the work done. The author suggests this as a solution to the problem:

Present a handwritten memo to your boss that says:

"Here are the projects I am working on for the next three months (or whatever time frame you choose) and the schedule for completing each one, as I see it:
   Project A, completion date:＿＿＿＿＿
   Project B, completion date:＿＿＿＿＿
   Project C, completion date:＿＿＿＿＿
Unless I hear from you otherwise, I will work on them accordingly."

By giving this note to your supervisor, you will not only get their attention, but open communication lines. By doing this you will get better clarification and direction on which project is important to your supervisor. Just remember to use the **USA** method to say no. If you never say no, what is yes worth??? *(Submitted by Jennifer Roberson and Alice Redditt)*

Good Advice:

One-Minute Meditations to Relieve Stress - Obviously, this will be easier if you are working in a private space than if you are sharing an office. These include the following:

- Sit in a relaxed posture and breathe deeply, in and out, for one minute.
- Focus on relaxing your tongue and jaw for one minute.
- Intentionally slow your breathing for one minute.
- Sitting comfortably with your eyes gently open, focus your awareness on a spot outside of yourself for one minute.
- Sitting comfortably with your eyes closed, focus your awareness on a particular location *inside* yourself, such as your heart, your third eye, or your navel.
- Imagine a friend's face smiling at you.
- Imagine receiving a warm hug from an old friend.

(Excerpt from: *Maximum Energy for Life* by Mackie Shilstone) *(Submitted by Janell Becker)*

Food for Thought:

How many calories must we use or eliminate to drop a pound?

Each pound equals 3,500 calories - so to lose a pound a week, you need to create a deficit of 500 calories a day (500 calories x 7 days = 3,500). The most practical way to achieve this weekly goal involves 2 steps: (1) cut 250 calories every day from your diet, preferably by choosing smaller portions and omitting high calories snacks, sweets or alcohol; and (2) burn 250 calories every day with additional exercise.

Example: cycling 20-30 minutes in the morning and walking a mile after lunch or dinner. With this method you could lose 26 pounds in 6 months. *(Submitted by Julie Cuevas)*

FYI:

Check 21 is a federal law that is designed to enable banks to handle more checks electronically, which should make check processing faster and more efficient. Today, banks often must physically move original paper checks from the bank where the checks are deposited to the bank that pays them. This transportation can be inefficient and costly. Check 21 became effective on October 28, 2004.

Instead of physically moving paper checks from one bank to another, Check 21 will allow banks to process more checks electronically. Banks can capture a picture of the front and back of the check along with the associated payment information and transmit this information electronically. If a receiving bank or its customer requires a paper check, the bank can use the electronic picture and payment information to create a paper "substitute check." This process enables banks to reduce the cost of physically handling and transporting original paper checks, which can be very expensive.

After October 28, 2004, you may receive a substitute check when you were expecting an original check. For example, if you receive canceled checks with your account statement, you might begin to receive a mixture of canceled original and substitute checks. If you receive image statements (pictures of several checks on a single page), you also may notice that some of the pictures are of substitute checks.

With Check 21, banks will likely process more checks electronically. As a result, your check may reach your bank faster and be paid sooner. Always make sure you have enough money in your account to cover the checks you write at the time that you write them. *(Submitted by Janice Boyd)*

OP Highlight:

Diane Keller is our featured Office Professional. She is Secretary/Office Automation for the Corn Host Plant Resistance Research Unit, Crop Science Research Laboratory, Mississippi State, Mississippi. Diane received a BE in Business Education, with a minor in Accounting, from Mississippi State University. She worked in the Administrative Office at the ARS, Mississippi State Location for seven years, U.S. Forest Service for two years, and the VAMC in Jackson, Mississippi, for five years. She returned to ARS, Mississippi State Location in 2001.

Diane is interested in science, economics, and accounting. She really enjoys learning and working with applicable software to enter, retrieve, and prepare financial reports. Diane is a member of the Faculty and Professional Women's Association at Mississippi State University and is involved with the Science Fair (to promote an interest and awareness of science) at Rosa Stewart School (a fifth grade school) in Starkville, Mississippi.

She enjoys spending quality time with her daughter, Lisa, who lives in Birmingham, Alabama.

Council Members:

Janell Becker, Food and Feed Safety Research Unit, SRRC, New Orleans, LA, *Senior Chair*

Telecia Burton, Channel and Watershed Processes Research Unit, NSL, Oxford, MS, *Junior Chair*

Tammy Dorman, National Soil Dynamics Laboratory, Auburn, AL, *Recorder*

Kay Bolen, Animal Waste Management Research Unit, Bowling Green, KY

Janice Boyd, Commodity Utilization Unit, SRRC, New Orleans, LA

Marlene Coley, Application & Production Technology Research Unit, Stoneville, MS

Julie Cuevas, Small Fruits Research Unit, Poplarville, MS

Drusilla Fratesi, Mid South Area Office, Stoneville, MS

Linda Fulton, Crop Science Research Laboratory, Mississippi State, MS

Sandra Hineman, Honey Bee Breeding, Genetics, and Physiology Research Unit, Baton Rouge, LA

Alice Redditt, Southern Weed Science Research Unit, Stoneville, MS

Jennifer Roberson, Mid South Area Office, Stoneville, MS

Lucienne Savell, National Sedimentation Laboratory, Oxford, MS, ***Web Master***

Emily Willis, Forage-Animal Production Research Unit, Lexington, KY

Madeline Hall, Soil and Water Research Unit, Baton Rouge, LA, ***Technical Advisor***

Dr. Deborah Brennan, Associate Area Director, Mid South Area, ***Sponsor***

Quote:

It is common sense to take a method and try it. If it fails, admit it frankly and try another. But above all, try something. ***Franklin D. Roosevelt***

If you have ideas for future newletters, please send to Telecia Burton at tburton@ars.usda.gov.