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Pacific Southwest Research Station, Albany, CA 94710

Vlach Retires after 27 Years Federal Service

Personnel Management Specialist Sheila A. Vlach will officially say “Goodbye” to her many friends and coworkers at PSW on April 3, when she retires after nearly 28 years of Federal service.

As a teenager, Sheila went to work in the Social Security Administration on Sept. 26, 1965; she *still* is the very first teen *permanent* hire in that agency. Eventually she left her Federal job to be with her young family, but in the mid-1970s she rejoined the SSA.

Although Sheila lived and worked in southern California, her family home was in the Sierra Nevada foothills. In 1980 she heard the siren song: a human-relations position beckoned from Tahoe National Forest. Sheila moved to Grass Valley, staying 9 years, until a further promotion brought her to the Bay Area and to PSW in 1989.

During her years with the Forest Service, Sheila says, she has held just about every job in human resources. Working her way up the ladder has provided experience, perspective, and know-how that her supervisors appreciated. Consequently, great challenges came her way, including opportunities to participate on national task forces and panels and to gain recognition for her contributions. The best rewards are closer to home, though, Sheila says. These are the rewards of “one-on-one meetings when someone says ‘Thank you for helping me.’”

Now that she is retiring, Sheila is going to “play with flowers.” She has been studying floral design, and once she has returned to and settled in Grass Valley, she plans to turn her passion for flowers into her *next* career. She also intends to continue her volunteer work, particularly teaching handicrafts, reading, and other skills to children with special needs.

What advice does Sheila have for all of us? “Keep working hard,” she says, “as a family or a group, and show respect for other peoples’ positions. Take time to communicate with respect; you’ll get more done.” And she added “The Forest Service is the nicest group of people I’ve ever worked with. Be thankful for things we have here that many other employers do not offer. I’m going to miss all the good people I know.”

Thompson to Leave FS Deputy Chief Post

Clyde Thompson, FS Deputy Chief—Business Operations, has accepted a new job as Associate Assistant Secretary for Administration, U.S. Department of Agriculture, in Washington, D. C. Lou Gallegos is the Assistant Secretary for Administration. Clyde has been FS Deputy Chief—Business Operations for the past 2 years; before then he served as Associate Deputy Chief—Operations. He assumes his new position early next month. His successor has not yet been announced.

Ziemer Retires with 44 Years Federal Service

With long and distinguished service of 44 years, Robert R. Ziemer retires on April 3. In his career with the Station, Bob has been a research forester, hydrologist, Project Leader, and Director of the Station’s Redwood Sciences Laboratory at Arcata, California.

Upon joining the FS in 1956 as a temporary engineering aid on a Ranger District in northern California, he earned, as Bob recalls it, \$3175/year. He joined the PSW staff in Berkeley in 1957. “I became recognized early in my career by the Station management because I was the Station’s only lost-time accident that year: I ground my fingers to the bone in a spring-loaded clock gear.” In 1958 he got a student tree position on the Modoc National Forest, in northern California. In 1960, following graduate studies, he became a research forester at the Station’s Central Sierra Snow Laboratory, at Soda Springs, California, for 2 years before returning to Berkeley. He transferred to Arcata in 1970, and became a hydrologist at the Redwood Sciences Laboratory in 1977.

Bob served as Project Leader—Flood and Sediment Reduction Research, at Berkeley from 1966 to 1968. Since 1982 he has led the Hillslope Processes/Fishery Research Unit at Arcata, and more recently he has been Laboratory Director at Arcata as well. His personal research has centered on watershed management, including soil moisture use by trees, streamflow, root strength, pipeflow, and water-shed/landscape analysis.

Born in Oklahoma City, Bob and family moved to California, where he received his early schooling in Long Beach and Fullerton. For higher education, he traveled north, earning his B.S. degree in forestry (1959) and M.S. degree in forest influences (1963) at the University of California at Berkeley, and his Ph.D. degree in earth resources (1978) at Colorado State University. In recent years, Bob has acquired considerable expertise at PSW in Internet technology and its application to research.

After retirement, Bob will be doing special assignments for PSW, seeking opportunities in State and local agencies, and spending more time with his family. That family has over the past 15 years consisted of “a stream of foster children,” whose number Bob says he could not even guess. He and his wife, Marian, receive these children through Child Protective Services, which takes babies at birth and transfers them to the Ziemer home in McKinleyville within a few hours. “We get the high-risk medically fragile infants,” explains Bob. “Some we have for only a few days, others for several years. We have adopted two and are trying to adopt a third who has been with us for more than 8 years.”

Looking back on his long career at PSW, Bob observes that he has served under all but the first 3 of the 16 Station Directors. Because of the high turnover of Directors in recent years, Bob says that “the PSW research staff represents long-term stability and can assist or hinder these temporary managers greatly. For me, these past 40-plus years at PSW have been great.”

Something Old, Something New at IFG

Valerie Hipkins, director of the FS National Forest Genetic Electrophoresis Laboratory (NFGEL), Suellen Carroll, Pat Guge, and Randy Meyer are working on an exciting and seminal project. They are profiling and cataloguing DNA collected this winter and spring from 13 trees planted nearly 250 years ago at historic Mount Vernon, Virginia, home of George Washington, America's first president. It is the first step in the creation of a genetic database for specific ornamental trees.

The Laboratory is funded by the National Forest System, but located at the Station's Institute of Forest Genetics at Placerville. Its Director reports to the Assistant Station Director—Research, Northern California..

The human genome has been studied for a long time. Not so with trees, according to Dean Norton, Mount Vernon's director of horticulture, who became interested in trees he thinks were planted under George Washington's supervision. He called upon Virginia Polytechnic University and the Forest Service—meaning, ultimately, NFGEL—to clone selected trees from Mount Vernon (the University's job) and map the trees' genetic makeup (NFGEL's responsibility). DNA profiling in plants is important in distinguishing varieties, cultivars, and species of horticultural or ornamental species. Less common, but relevant for the Mount Vernon trees, is the attempt at identifying individuals within a plant species.

By this fall, the scientists expect to have mapped the genetic structure of the five types of trees from Mount Vernon: American holly, white ash, Canadian hemlock, tulip poplar, and white mulberry. Says Valerie, "We will be doing DNA 'profiling,' ... similar to the type of work most people are familiar with in criminal cases. With people there is a tremendous database of information. There is no similar database for trees. This to a very great extent is new; we'll be breaking new ground."

While NFGEL scientists are in the lab, Virginia Polytechnic scientists will be in the field, propagating and grafting the Mount Vernon trees. Eventually, genetic maps developed by FS scientists will be used to authenticate clones of these venerable Virginia trees—the only living reminders of George Washington and the Revolutionary period of American history.

Meetings/Conferences/Seminars

- Bob Powers, Team Leader—Site Processes Research, Redding, presented an invited paper on "Global Wood Demand and the Role of Planted Forests" at the 2002 Meeting of the California Licensed Foresters Association, March 8, Sacramento, Calif.

Personnelly Speaking

Extra Effort Awards

- Enoch Bell, Assistant Station Director—Research, Southern California, for "assistance in composing and editing materials used in PSW's Congressional briefing packages and participation in Congressional briefing meetings."

- Diane Delany, Institute of Forest Genetics, Davis, for "development of laboratory procedures that catalyzed successful transition from genetic to dendrochronological focus in our research program."

- Nancy Dias, Station Director's Office, Albany, for "extra efforts in contacting members of the California and Hawaii Congressional delegations and arranging briefing appointments and compiling background information."

- Garland Mason, Assistant Station Director—Research, Northern California, for "outstanding leadership in the development of Congressional briefing packages." Garland also received a Certificate of Merit and Cash Award from the FS Deputy Chief—Research and Development for "serving as PSW Acting Station Director, 2000-2001."

- Martha Shibata, Information Services Group, Albany, for "outstanding technical and visual information support in composing and compiling briefing materials for Congressional briefing packages."

- Marcia Vega, Facilities and Administrative Services Group, Albany, for "outstanding services in assisting Information Services in relocating, sorting, labeling, and refiling of documents and film negatives."

- Robert Westfall, Institute of Forest Genetics, Albany, for "development and application of new statistical approaches for tree-ring analysis."

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