THE WASHINGTON CONNECTION

Advancing Government Accountability

Washington DC Chapter • P.O. Box 423 • Washington, D.C. 20044-0423 • (703) 758-4080 • November 1999

Inside:

Upcoming Events:

November 19, 1999: National Executive Committee Meeting at AGA Headquarters, Alexandria, VA

December 9, 1999: Monthly Luncheon meeting featuring Dennis Fischer, Commissioner, GSA Federal Technology Service, at the Grand Hyatt

January 27-28, 2000: AGA's Eleventh Annual Federal Leadership Conference, Washington, DC

Dr. Michael R. Dombeck, Chief, U.S. Forest Service

Luncheon Speaker

Dr. Michael R Dombeck became the 14th Chief of the Forest Service on January 6,1997. As Forest Service Chief, Dombeck has focused his efforts on promoting partnerships, collaborative stewardship, accountability, and financial health.

When he assumed his duties he was confronted with an agency in the midst of an ever-increasing public debate between environmentalists, commercial industry, and recreation on the use and preservation of over 150 national forests. At the same time, he was faced with serious management issues that included many senior leadership vacancies, critical financial audits, a large backlog of civil rights complaints, Y2K issues, and an aging technology infrastructure. It further accelerated with an unprecedented joint House and Senate hearing of three subcommittees in March of 1998 where Congressional concerns about Forest Service accountability were discussed at length. Chief Dombeck responded with the roll out of the Natural Resources Agenda and a series of management initiatives to begin to restore accountability to the Forest Service. See Dr. Dombeck's complete biography on page 4 of this newsletter.

1999/2000 AGA Washington DC Chapter
Monthly Luncheon and CPE Session

Thursday, November 4
Grand Hyatt Hotel
1000 H Street, NW (At Metro Center - 11th Street Exit)

11:30 to 12:00	Social
12:00 to 1:10 pm	Luncheon Meeting (1 CPE):
Announcements	
Lunch	
Luncheon Speaker	
1:15 to 4:00 pm	Afternoon Session (3 CPEs):
1:15 to 2:30 pm	*CPE Session*
2:30 to 2:45 pm	*Break*
2:45 to 4:00 pm	*CPE Session*

Costs:

Luncheon:	Members	$19.00
	Non-members	$30.00
Luncheon & Afternoon CPE Session:	Members	$40.00
	Non-members	$50.00
Afternoon CPE Session Only:	Members	$30.00
	Non-members	$40.00

For reservations, please call the AGA Washington DC Chapter voice mail line at (703) 758-4080 and select option 1. If you prefer, you can register by email to jdonlon@gt.com or you can register at our homepage: www.agadc.org. Please forward your name, agency/company, and telephone number.

President's Message

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"Advancing Government Accountability" is more than just a theme for Mike Dombeck, the Chief of the U.S. Forest Service. Chief Dombeck has been the Forest Service chief since January of 1997 and was confronted with an agency in the midst of an ever-increasing public debate between environmentalists, commercial industry, and recreation on the use and preservation of over 150 national forests. At the same time, he was faced with serious management issues that included many senior leadership vacancies, critical financial audits, a large backlog of civil rights complaints, Y2K issues, and an aging technology infrastructure. It further accelerated with an unprecedented joint House and Senate hearing of three subcommittees in March of 1998 where Congressional concerns about Forest Service accountability were discussed at length. Chief Dombeck responded with the roll out of the Natural Resources Agenda and a series of management initiatives to begin to restore accountability to the Forest Service.

Chief Dombeck will be our luncheon speaker on November 4 and you will have the opportunity to hear the head of one of our major federal agencies describe why both program and financial accountability are fundamental to the successful delivery of public programs. A strong advocate of the value and benefit of The Results Act of 1993, he will relate his goal of integrating management of natural resource programs in the field or "on the ground," as the Forest Service says, with strategic planning, budget, and performance measurement.

Our luncheon seminars continue with the afternoon of November 4 with a three hour CPE session on FACTS II. This is a terrific follow-on to our all day November 1 training on financial statement reporting. The Financial Management Service is pleased to present this focused training on their newest reporting tool. Please look for additional information on this session in this newsletter so you can sign up for this training opportunity.

You still have the opportunity to register for the November 1 training event entitle, **1999 Financial Reporting Update**, which features some great speakers from Treasury, OMB, and the Congress. Pre-registration must be completed by October 25. Eleanor Long and our training committee have planned a very relevant program updating participants on government-wide consolidated financial statements and improvements to the data collections and presentation of information. It will be at the JW Marriott and you can find more information about this program at our web site, www.agadc.org.

As the holiday season approaches, I want to encourage you to participate in a couple of wonderful community service opportunities that our Chapter has to offer. This month, through a donation to **Project Harvest** you can help fight hunger locally and ensure that some families can celebrate the holidays without concern about where their next meal will come from. Also, plan now to support the United States Marine Corps **"Toys-for-Tots Campaign,"** which will be held at our Annual Holiday Reception on December 16. Sharing with others is the most rewarding experience for me personally, and I encourage you to consider these community service opportunities this holiday season.

Vincette

The Chapter has earned 3,315 points in the Chapter Recognition Program as of August 1999

November Luncheon Speaker: Dr. Michael R. Dombeck, Chief of the U.S. Forest Service

Dr. Michael R. Dombeck, Chief, U.S. Forest Service

Dr. Michael R Dombeck became the 14th Chief of the Forest Service on January 6,1997.

He was born on September 21, 1948 in Stevens Point, Wisconsin. It was in northern Wisconsin's lake country that his appreciation for natural resources was cultivated. Dr. Dombeck worked as a fishing guide in the region for eleven summers. He earned undergraduate and graduate degrees in biological sciences and education from the University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point, and the University of Minnesota. He earned his doctorate in fisheries biology from Iowa State University and is noted for research contributions on muskies and lake habitat management. In addition, Dr. Dombeck has authored numerous scholarly publications and made frequent national as well as international scientific presentations.

Dr. Dombeck taught biology, chemistry, science, zoology, and fisheries management at public schools and universities. He spent twelve years with the Forest Service primarily in the midwest and western United States. In his last Forest Service post as National Fisheries Program Manager in Washington, DC, he was recognized for outstanding leadership in developing and implementing fisheries programs and forging partnerships. He also spent a year as a Legislative Fellow working in the United States Senate with responsibility for natural resource and interior appropriations issues.

Dr. Dombeck was named acting director of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in February 1994. In that position, he focused on two major objectives: creating a long-term BLM vision to improve the health of the land and reinventing the agency to reduce red tape, streamline functions, and improve customer service.

As Forest Service Chief, Dr. Dombeck has focused his efforts on promoting partnerships, collaborative stewardship, accountability, and financial health. Early in 1998, Dombeck introduced the Forest Service Natural Resource Agenda. This agenda identifies four emphasis areas. They are:

- Watershed Health and Restoration
- Development of a Long-Term Forest Roads Policy
- Sustainable Forest Management
- Recreation

He resides with his wife and daughter in Northern Virginia.

Education

- Ph.D. 1984 - Fisheries Biology, Iowa State University
- M.S. 1977 - Zoology, University of Minnesota
- M.S.T. 1974 - Biology & Education, University of Wisconsin Stevens Point
- B.S. 1971 - Biology & General Science, University of Wisconsin Stevens Point

Professional Affiliations

American Fisheries Society (Certified Fisheries Scientist), Society of American Foresters, American Institute of Fishery Research Biologists, Gamma Sigma Delta, Honorary Society (Agriculture), Sigma Xi, Scientific Research Society Board of Governors, Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame

November CPE Session

The topic for the November CPE session is FACTS II and the Standard General Ledger (SGL). This three-hour working session will be a shortened version from Day 1 of the Financial Management Service's FACTS II training class. The FACTS II team has offered this two-day version to agencies. At the CPE session, FMS personnel will present a brief overview of FACTS II, review the edits in detail, discuss SGL accounts involved in the edits, and do exercises with SGL trial balances and the FACTS II edits. Judy Yuran, manager of the SGL, and Rita Cronley, both from the Financial Management Service will be the presenters.

Our Fourth Annual Toys-for-Tots Event...............................

Once again, AGA Washington DC Chapter has selected the Marine Corps Reserve Toys-for-Tots Campaign as our Holiday Event on December 16, 1999. It is our fourth year with this fine organization, and I hope it will be a banner one for us to provide toys for the children in the District of Columbia, Northern Virginia, and Suburban Maryland.

The Toys-for-Tots Campaign has been active since 1947. Each year, they have donated hundreds of thousands of toys through local social welfare organizations. The U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys-for-Tots Program is one of the nation's flagship Christmas charitable endeavors and the U.S. Marine Corps' premier community action program. Over the past fifty-one years, U.S. Marines have distributed over 243,300,000 toys to 121,000,000 needy children throughout the nation. The ages of the children in the program range from newborn to fifteen years of age.

Marine representatives will be attending our Holiday Reception to thank our members for their contributions. Please bring a new <u>unwrapped</u> toy when you come to celebrate the holidays with us. Since this may be the only toy a child might receive this holiday season, we have been asked to provide toys that have a perceived value of $10 or more. In accordance with the requests of our Marine coordinators; toy guns, knives, or other dangerous items can not be accepted. If you prefer to donate, a check made payable to the TOYS-FOR-TOTS FOUNDATION would be welcome.

If you will not be available to attend the Holiday Reception, have a friend or co-worker bring the toy. Or you can mail a donation to P.O. Box 423, Washington, DC 20044 and mark the envelope "Toys-for-Tots." We will make sure it gets into our Chapter's donation. It is not too early to go out there and shop for those special toys. You can enjoy the experience and be doing a generous thing at the same time. Everyone who has participated in the past has gotten so much pleasure from being in this event—don't be left out of the fun!

Marcia Caplan/Michelle Lewis
Toys-for-Tots Chairpersons

Highlights of the September 22, 1999 Executive Committee Meeting ....

Robert Biancucci, Chapter Treasurer, called the Executive Committee meeting for month of September 1999 to order at 12:00 pm stating that Chapter President Vincette Goerl would not be able to attend the meeting. Additionally, other members of the committee would not be present, but forwarded information to be presented at the meeting. Items discussed were:

Monthly Programs

- The September program was canceled due to Hurricane Floyd. There are plans to reschedule the September program, possibly in April or May.
- The October Luncheon speaker, Karen Alderman, Executive Director, JFMIP, is confirmed. The three-hour CPE session for the November 4, 1999 monthly program will be a FACTS II presentation.

Dedicated Training Sessions

- Over one hundred letters and flyers are being sent out the week of September 19, 1999 to CFOs and speakers on the November 1 conference, "1999 Financial Reporting Update".
- The February 28 and 29, 1999 conference will be held at the Mayflower Renaissance Hotel.

Membership

- Miguel Castillo has contacted the Virginia and Maryland CPA Societies to get a list of members. These lists can be purchased for approximately $110 dollars. The lists will be used as a recruiting tool.

Newsletter

- The cut-off for the November issue of the newsletter is September 23. The cut-off is early because the November luncheon is earlier in the month than the September and October luncheons. Also, we need to meet this cut-off deadline in order to take advantage of the reduced postage rates.

Web Site

- The mailing list was activated during the first week of September. The National Office provided a list of e-mail addresses for DC chapter members and those addresses were added to the mailing list. The mailing list has approximately eight hundred subscribers. Two mailing list messages were sent out: the September mailing list message (includes a link to the current Washington Connection Adobe Acrobat file on the web and information with the corresponding link to web on the monthly luncheon) and a message notifying subscribers that the September monthly program was canceled.
- The menu on the web site has changed. There is one menu item for all DC Chapter events. This is taking the place of the CPE and Social Events menu items. In addition, a scrolling marquee has been added to the main page highlighting events and allowing visitors to link to the page that contains details on the event.
- A secure form has been added for the "1999 Financial Reporting Update" conference registration.

Budget and Finance

- Lucy Lomax plans to have the program year budget finalized for the next committee meeting. Robert Biancucci reported some of the receipts in the checking account are actually due to the National Office. The receipts belonging to the National Office are the result of EDI transaction rebates from the past Professional Development Conference. These transactions are still being worked out with the National Office.

Administration

- The chapter has a total of 3,315 points at the end of August. This year, points are awarded for non-CPE meetings and social activities plans. The non-CPE meetings would include the executive committee meetings through April 2000. We currently only have one non-CPE social event planned, the holiday social and "Toys-for-Tots" campaign. The chapter can receive points for up to three non-CPE social events. This plan earns 200 points if submitted to the National Office by September 15.

Professional Services/Research

- Simcha Kuritzky reported that his article in the newsletter now asks for comments to be directed to him. He has received comments through e-mail on the article presented in the September issue.

Future Executive Committee Meetings

- Dick Willett suggested moving the executive committee meeting time to the morning. Everyone present agreed that a morning time would be suitable and suggested 8:00 am as a good time to call the meetings to order.

Robert Biancucci adjourned the meeting at 12:40 pm.

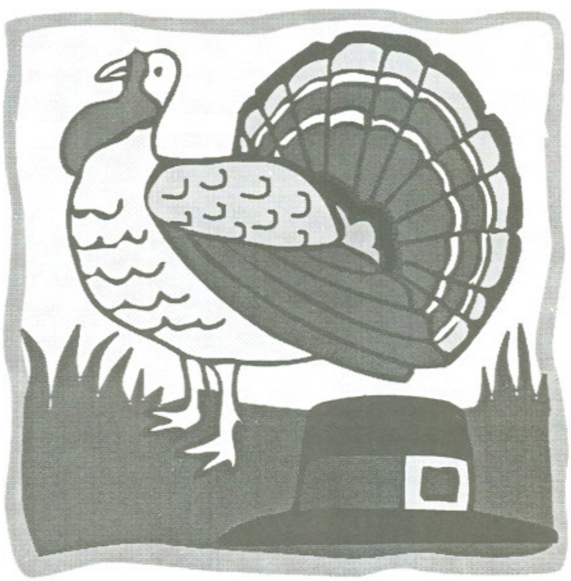
50th Anniversary Corner

Editorial Policy and Purpose

The chapter newsletter has been the major communication link between the members and chapter officers. This was true from the outset of the chapter, as evidenced by the oldest issue among the newsletters in our archives. That publication, dated February 1956, consisted of four type-written pages without many of the features of today's newsletter, such as photographs, columns by the chapter President, or advance announcement of the next meeting. It does, however, report on the prior month's meeting.

The next oldest newsletter available, September 1956, is important in the chapter's history because it was the first newsletter published after the local chapter was formed, and included a message from D.J. Harrill, thanking the members for the honor of serving as the first President of the local chapter. This newsletter is also of historical significance because it stated that the chapter's policy would be:

> "... to publish a monthly newsletter as a means of conveying to the membership items that will be of general interest to all. The newsletter will not attempt to constitute itself a technical publication, but will limit its coverage to matters of news regarding our membership, the Association activities, and accounting developments. The technical articles will be published in the 'Federal Accountant,' the official organ of the national organization."



This policy is equally applicable to today's newsletter program, which stresses the importance of communicating organizational, education, training, and some technical information to the membership. Current practice, however, is to have at least one technical article each month.

Photos and Other Tidbits

While photographs are now a normal and expected feature in each month's newsletter, the first picture—that of the people from the previous monthly meeting's head table—did not appear until the November 1958 issue. The newsletter masthead, however, is an altogether different matter.

Some of the earliest chapter newsletters featured a feather pen and inkwell as the banner. While the newsletter banner in those days sometimes displayed a drawing of the U.S. Capitol, by August 1959, the pen and inkwell gave way to a small circular picture showing an eagle sitting on balanced scales along with a book aptly entitled: "Control." The association's name encircled the picture. Needless to say, several different logos, seals, and emblems—both plain and fancy—have graced our front page over the years, shifting with the dictates and styles of the times. Over the past ten years only subtle changes have been made to the masthead; the changes are usually to commemorate some special event. For example, our current newsletter masthead proudly includes the 50th year anniversary logo.

The August 1959 newsletter was memorable for other reasons as well. A new name—*Members News Bulletin*—was adopted. Further, announcement of the next monthly meeting became page one news for the first time. This continues, but the newsletter has been known as *The Washington Connection* for nearly a decade now.

While not headline news, the newsletter has also been used for a source of revenue for the Chapter. In 1975 space was offered for advertisement by professional firms and other accounting related groups. This endeavor, however, was short-lived, but was revived again in 1996.

Current Plans

As we move into the new millenium with proliferation of internet technology, we expect that the chapter website (http://www.agadc.org) will gradually become the chief communication vehicle. We already maintain the current and two previous issues of the newsletter on the web and have instituted a mail listserver to send the newsletter and other announcements to members. By next program year plans are to dramatically reduce chapter printing and mailing costs by making the newsletter available solely through electronic publication on the web.

Nominations Solicited for AGA's National Awards Program

As part of AGA's National Awards Program, the Washington DC Chapter is soliciting nominations for the **Frank Greathouse Distinguished Leadership Award, the Achievement of the Year Award, the Special Achievement Award, the Education and Training Award, the Research Achievement Award, and the Cornelius E. Tierney/Ernst & Young Research Award**. These awards will be given at the annual AGA Professional Development Conference, July 2 through 6, 2000, at the San Francisco Marriott Hotel, San Francisco, California. The award categories, criteria, and nomination procedures are on the AGA web page at www.agacgfm.org.

Nominations may be submitted to this Chapter or to the National Office except for the Special Achievement Award nomination which must be made from a chapter. Nominations sent to this Chapter must be received by February 4, 2000. Mail nominations to:

AGA Washington, D.C. Chapter
ATTN: Awards Committee
P.O. Box 423
Washington, D.C. 20044-0423

or fax nominations to:
Warren Cottingham at
(202) 874-9634

All nominations received for the National Awards at this Chapter will be considered for the Washington DC Chapter awards as well. If you have any questions about the awards or nomination procedures, please call Warren Cottingham at (202) 874-9584.

Inside the Black Box: Rewriting History? Part 2 - Data Model Changes ....

by Simcha Kuritzky, CGFM, CPA

In recent years, Treasury FMS has increased the amount of detail required in their trial balance-based interfaces (FACTS and FACTS II), especially in the area of trading partner. There is a JFMIP requirement that such detail come from the reporting agency's accounting system. But what does an agency do when the new requirements forces them to increase the level of detail that has already been recorded? If the balances must come from the accounting system, then the detail must be added retroactively.

For Example

An agency wishes to restate their accounts payable balances so they include agency Department ID and Fund Group. Their first step is to update their vendor file to include these fields for all federal agency vendors.

The quickest solution would then be to add these fields to the accounts payable subsidiary ledger, and run a program to populate them with this information from the vendor file. This provides a current balance, but that is all it provides. To get balance information for different points in time, it is necessary to add this information to the journals.

Restating the proprietary liability accounts (e.g., 2110, 2120, 2130, 2190) in the journals is relatively straightforward, whether this is done for all journals, or just to establish a beginning balance for the current year. Since there are no accounting model changes or closing entries, the process only has to read all journal entries and add the new attributes. If only beginning balances for the current year are needed, then the entries can be summarized by appropriation symbol, GL account, and vendor first and net zero entries discarded. However, because the vendor detail was not required in times past, the agency may have recorded some activity, such as corrections, adjustments, accruals, and other summary entries without the proper vendor information (or with a blank vendor). Unfortunately, the only way to handle that activity is to back out the entries that have the wrong vendor and put them back in with the correct vendor.

Restating the budgetary liability account 4901 presents special difficulties. The agency first has to establish when each accounting model was used. Let us say that the agency model prior to FY1997 used account 4900 for expenditures, not just payables, and it closed at year end. For FY1997-98, only account 4901 was used for payables. The FY1997 beginning balances were established at a fund level only, with no vendor detail. For FY1999 on, accounts 4971, 4981, and 4901 are used for payables, with 4971 and 4981 closing to 4901 at year end.

If a complete restatement of journals is desired, then the postings to account 4900 in the pre-FY1997 journals has to be split into two groups: cash entries, which are represented by account 4902 in the new journal, and payable entries, represented by 4901. The confirmation postings, which did not post to budgetary accounts, will have to be amended to include a debit to 4901 and a credit to 4902 posting (or its backout). The post-FY1996 entries to accounts 4901, 4971, and 4981 can be kept as is. The new vendor attribute details will be added to all old journal records.

If only a FY2000 beginning balance is needed, the agency has two choices. It can restate the budgetary postings as above, or it can base them on the accounts payable subsidiary ledger. Restating the budgetary postings for entries made before FY1997 requires the same complicated split out and amendments as a complete restatement. The FY1997 beginning balance entry for account 4901 cannot be used, because it contains no vendor detail, so the liability liquidations that occurred in FY1997 and later would create negative (debit) payables balances. Restating the FY1999 entries only requires that postings to 4971 and 4981 be remapped to update the account 4901 (post-close) balance.

Since the SGL requires that account 4901 be supported by the proprietary liability balances, and the proprietary accounts are real, for most agencies the easiest course of action would be to copy all the proprietary entries, and substitute the budgetary account in their stead. First, though, the agency would have to compare the current beginning balances of all proprietary and budgetary liability accounts, and document any differences. It would have to post entries to eliminate these differences in the old journal before switching to the new journal. By "switch," I mean that the old journals would be archived, and the new, restated journals substituted in their place. So the adjusting entries would disappear. If these adjustments were really needed, then no further action would be necessary. However, if these adjustments were only entered because of timing differences, then the agency should reverse these entries in the new journals.

Comments, suggestions, and critiques are welcome. Send them to Simcha_Kuritzky@amsinc.com and not to the AGA.

Association of Government Accountants
Montgomery/Prince Georges County AGA
Presents
Activity Based Costing at The US Mint
Thursday, November 4, 1999
Held At
MACPA's Bethesda Center
Recommended 4 Hours CPE

12:30 PM	Registration
1:00 PM	Overview - Why ABC? Progress to date, Future Plans Jonathan Elliott, CPCM Cost and Budget Manager - US Mint's Circulating Business Unit
2:00 PM	Defining Activities and Determining Activity Costs Maria Mendoza and Kathy Gottlieb, CPA US Mint's Circulating Business Unit
3:00 PM	Break
3:15 PM	Flowcharting the ABC Process, What if Scenarios, Implementing ABC at the US Mint Maria Mendoza and Kathy Gottlieb, CPA
5:00 PM	Program ends

Registration Fee:	Payment Methods:
AGA Member: $50	Government Training Authorization Form (Please bring to the workshop)
Non-member: $60	Check Payable to M/PG AGA
Register by Fax:	ATTN: Kathleen Brosky (301) 929-6575
Register by Phone:	(301) 942-6566
Register by E-mail:	krbrosky@erols.com
Register by mail:	M/PG AGA 12916 Eloise Avenue Rockville, MD 20853

Name: ______________________________

Agency/Firm: ______________________________

Billing Address: ______________________________

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Business Telephone: ______________________________

AGA Member Number: ______________________________

For additional information, call Mike Kess (202) 874-6354 or Kathleen Brosky (301) 942-6566.

The MACPA Bethesda Center is only a few blocks from the Metro. Parking is available in the public lot adjacent to the building. This is a metered parking lot costing 25 cents per half hour. Visitors can find plenty of long-term parking on the upper levels of the garage or in other local garages.

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