

Joint NEWS RELEASE

US Forest Service -- Northern Region

Idaho Department of Lands



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Missoula, Mont. March 12, 2009 — Responding to the urgent need to create meaningful jobs for rural Americans, U.S. Forest Service Chief Abigail Kimbell announced a second round of projects that will receive funding from a portion of the \$1.15 billion allocated to the agency through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA).

The Northern Region of the Forest Service and the Idaho Department of Lands will receive more than \$2.0 million in ARRA funds to implement hazardous fuel treatments on state and private lands in Boundary, Benewah, Bonner and Kootenai Counties. The funding is expected to generate 55 jobs for residents in these rural counties.

“The Northern Region has a long-standing working relationship with Idaho’s State Forester,” said Forest Service Regional Forester Tom Tidwell. “With these funds, we can accomplish important work together to improve and maintain the resiliency of North Idaho’s forests, protect communities from wildfire and create jobs in these counties.”

The North Idaho Hazardous Fuels Project is one of ten Forest Service projects funded in this most recent announcement. More than 400 jobs are expected to be created from the \$32.5 million dollars allocated to projects in nine states, ranging from Florida to Alaska. Most of the projects are designed to reduce hazardous fuels and restore forested ecosystems. All of the projects were selected, in part, because work can begin – and jobs can be created – as soon as weather and ground conditions permit.

“Idaho is well-positioned to receive these funds and immediately begin work because of the strategic planning already completed by our counties,” explained State Forester George Bacon. “These counties have Community Wildfire Protection Plans in place that clearly prioritize where the most important hazardous fuels work is needed. The funds will allow us to continue our efforts to mitigate the risk of catastrophic wildfires while also providing needed employment for our residents.

There are two primary contacts for Idaho residents who are interested in learning more about opportunities that will be created for private contractors as a result of this funding. Nelle Coler of the Panhandle Area Council is the primary contact for those in Kootenai, Boundary, and Benewah Counties. Her phone number is (208) 772-0584, extension 3012. Bob Hatfield, the Chairman of Bonfire, Bonner County’s wildfire mitigation group, can be reached at (208) 448-

4324. Additional information about hazardous fuel treatments and contracting opportunities in the Idaho Panhandle area can be found at <http://plrcd.org/NOFIRE/> .

This week's announcement follows a similar notice issued last week in which Chief Kimbell released \$9.5 million in funding for three extensive road and watershed improvement projects in Montana. Those projects are expected to create 114 jobs.

Over 90% of \$1.15 billion of funding allocated to the Forest Service through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act remains available and decisions about additional proposals are expected during the next several weeks.

Additional information on the U.S. Forest Service's role in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act can be found at: <http://fs.usda.gov/recovery>. Information on the total federal effort can be found at <http://www.recovery.gov>.

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