



WESTERN FORESTRY LEADERSHIP COALITION

BREAKING NEWS - American Recovery and Reinvestment Bill

TO: WFLC Members
FROM: Caitlyn Peel, Government Affairs Director
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The first version of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Bill of 2009, better known as the “economic stimulus bill,” was released today by the House Appropriations Committee. The Bill focuses on key areas such as: energy, science, roads, bridges and other transportation related items, tax cuts, health care costs and others with the goal of strengthening the economy and creating employment opportunities and job preservation. The final non-tax section of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Bill of 2009 is expected to include upwards of \$550 billion in targeted investments with accompanying accountability measures. The tax section is expected to be \$300 billion and may include some energy tax credits. The entire House Appropriations Committee summary of the new legislation is available at <http://appropriations.house.gov/pdf/PressSummary01-15-09.pdf>

For several weeks, the Council of Western State Foresters has been working to detail and promote the numerous possibilities for economic stimulus green jobs in the western US. The CWSF Economic Stimulus Green Jobs Package is available at http://www.wflccenter.org/news_pdf/312_pdf.pdf and has also been submitted to the President-Elect Obama’s www.change.org website for posting (as of 1-16-09 the document has not been posted). The focus of Congress throughout the discussion of this bill has been on ‘shovel-ready’ opportunities that would result in immediate job creation and stimulus. For these reasons, established programs that can expedite the flow of money to the places where it can be readily used are the focus of the Bill. We expect this trend of accountability on program delivery and targeted priorities and investment to continue into the appropriations discussions with the new Administration.

The Forest Service is targeted to receive \$1.5 billion total (\$650 million for construction on public lands and parks and \$850 million for reducing wildfire threats on federal and non-federal land) in the Bill. In the House Appropriations Committee bill summary/report it is noted that investing today to reduce wildfire threats will not only create jobs in the short run, but also save on long-term costs of fighting fires in the future. The State and Private funds are designated for state and local volunteer programs and hazardous fuels reduction efforts in which states and communities have determined are highest priority. \$550 million is targeted for state fire assistance grants, hazardous fuels projects, volunteer fire assistance, cooperative forest health projects, city forest enhancements and wood-to-energy grants on State and private lands. Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) are highlighted as a way to readily spend this funding on important projects by extending existing contracts and/or creating new ones. This funding is expected to support 10,000 jobs, largely in rural areas. The remaining \$300 million is for hazardous fuels reduction, forest health, wood-to-energy grants and rehabilitation and restoration activities on Federal lands and is expected to support 5,400 jobs, largely in rural areas. Special note was made to areas with extensive forest die-back due to various pest and disease outbreaks.

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This economic stimulus bill contains many other provisions of interest such as: \$500 million for the Department of the Interior to use on water and related resources, \$800 million for the Department of Energy to use for biomass, rural development and facilities loan programs through NRCS' Rural Community Advancement Program and possible opportunities for competitive research funding. As these provisions and opportunities of interest are identified through further review of the bill, you will receive more detailed information.

The Senate Committees are diligently working to finalize their version of the stimulus package and we expect to see it in the next couple weeks. Each chamber will move through their approval process (either with a single bill or a series of bills) including the committee mark-up process and passage on the floor. The different versions (House and Senate) must then be reconciled through conferencing. The final votes will then occur and the bill will be sent to the new President for signature. The final package is expected around February 13th.

I will be providing updated information on this important issue as it becomes available. Please contact me with any questions.

The following text is an excerpt from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Bill of 2009.

FOREST SERVICE - CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT AND MAINTENANCE (INCLUDING TRANSFER OF FUNDS)

For an additional amount for “Capital Improvement and Maintenance”, \$650,000,000, for reconstruction, capital improvement, decommissioning, and maintenance of forest roads, bridges and trails; alternative energy technologies, energy efficiency enhancements and deferred maintenance at Federal facilities; and for remediation of abandoned mine sites, removal of fish passage barriers, and other critical habitat, forest improvement and water-shed enhancement projects on Federal lands and waters:

Provided, That funds may be transferred to “National Forest System”:

Provided further, That the amount set aside from this appropriation pursuant to section 1106 of this Act shall be not more than 5 percent instead of the percentage specified in such section.

WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT (INCLUDING TRANSFERS OF FUNDS)

For an additional amount for “Wildland Fire Management”, \$850,000,000, of which \$300,000,000 is for hazardous fuels reduction, forest health, wood to energy grants and rehabilitation and restoration activities on Federal lands, and of which \$550,000,000 is for State fire assistance hazardous fuels projects, volunteer fire assistance, cooperative forest health projects, city forest enhancements, and wood to energy grants on State and private lands:

Provided, That amounts in this paragraph may be transferred to “State and Private Forestry” and “National Forest System”:

Provided further, That the amount set aside from this appropriation pursuant to section 1106 of this Act shall be not more than 5 percent instead of the percentage specified in such section.