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GOP gub candidate Brian Sandoval with a pretty good slam against Rory: "I ain't no senator's son." http://bit.ly/ajxZjX #nvgop yesterday

Joe Heck seemed a little upset w/ Dina Titus' "scamming the health care system" accusation (made on @RalstonFlash's F2F Wednesday). #nvgop yesterday

Joe Heck with a rousing, passionate, well-done speech. Most charismatic speaker on the GOP ticket, up or down, in my opinion. #nvgop yesterday

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\$490 Thousand in Federal Stimulus To Be Spent on Nevada Tree Planting, Tree-Care Classes

By Sean Whaley | 4:16 pm July 9th, 2010

CARSON CITY – Federal government efforts to create jobs through stimulus funding have expanded to encompass an urban Clark County tree planting effort and related activities, including tree care training for Spanish-speaking workers.

The Nevada Division of Forestry has received funding from the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to make 2,500 trees available for free for planting by nonprofit organizations, government entities and others on urban public lands in Southern Nevada.

Money for the Nursery Greening Project comes from a \$490,000 grant the U.S. Forest Service has allotted for Clark County urban tree projects, said Adria DeCorte, who is overseeing the tree-planting portion of the project for the state Forestry Division.

Other projects included in the nearly half million dollar stimulus funding grant are tree care classes for Spanish-speaking green-industry workers, a city/regional tree inventory, and urban canopy assessments. Funding for the tree-care classes totals \$30,000.

When averaged out, if all the trees are planted, the cost per tree will be \$196.00.

The grant has generated some criticism by those who question whether any real sustainable jobs will be created.

When told about the project, Assemblyman John Hambrick, R-Las Vegas, said it does not sound like it will do much for job creation. It sounds more like a program sought by U.S. Sen. Majority Leader Harry Reid to win votes, he said.

"It's just unfortunate that these pork barrel things are coming forward now," Hambrick said.

Rep. Dean Heller, R-Nev., said in an emailed statement it is clear to him the stimulus is not working and the current economic policies are doing little to create jobs.

"My top priority in Congress is to get our economy turned around and Nevadans working again," he said. "The government cannot spur the economy with deficit fueled spending. Funding tree planting during record drought conditions in Nevada not only is poor use of federal dollars, but makes very little sense."

Nevada State Forester Pete Anderson said the project is in line with ARRA goals and was selected due to the unemployment rate and economic downturn in the Las Vegas area.

"The project funding has retained several jobs as well as created several more associated with care, potting, transporting and ultimately out-planting of these trees," he said. "The project is consistent with the administration's ARRA goals and the many benefits of a healthy urban forest, including energy conservation."

A statement from the U.S. Forest Service said in part: "Clark County has been devastated by the current economic recession. Funds will be used to retain and create jobs to grow and plant urban trees suited to the desert southwest. Education and training for tree care workers will also be provided to plant and manage trees for public health and safety."

Similar urban tree planting projects are under way in other states using federal stimulus money. Nearly \$700,000 in stimulus funds are being spent to plant 1,500 trees in Georgia. A Pennsylvania nonprofit group received \$300,000 in stimulus funds to plant 1,157 trees in 17 different municipalities to reduce pollution from storm water runoff. South Carolina is spending \$850,000 on competitive grants to cities and towns in part for urban tree planting.

According to the Nevada Division of Forestry, the recovery act provided the U.S. Department of Agriculture with \$28 billion in stimulus funding, with \$1.15 billion of the total allocated to the U.S. Forest Service for forest restoration, hazardous fuels reduction, construction and maintenance of facilities, trails and roads, green energy projects and grants to states, tribes and private landowners. The grant to the state Division of Forestry for the tree program came from this pot of funding.

Pete Sepp, vice president for communications and policy at the Washington, DC-based National Taxpayers Union, said some of the more questionable stimulus projects are just now seeping into the public consciousness. Much of the initial stimulus funding went to specifically defined categories like unemployment assistance, he said.

"People will likely be surprised by what they see," Sepp said. "You can select from huge panoply of very questionable projects."

One project that saw a lot of criticism was \$3.4 million for an underpass in Florida to protect turtles.

Sepp said the tree planting project will likely create temporary employment at best, except on the government payrolls.

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Many of the stimulus projects do not appear to be directed at long-term job preservation or creation, he said. In many cases they were aimed at quality of life or green environmental issues, Sepp said.

"It is exactly what you are going to see more of in the very near future," he said.

An extended payroll tax holiday might be one better way to generate job retention if not job creation in the private sector, Sepp said.

The Nevada stimulus [website](#) shows that the state Division of Forestry is expected to receive nearly \$4.4 million in ARRA funding, including the \$490,000 for the urban tree project.

Positions either created or anticipated for the different elements of the \$490,000 grant include half a dozen individuals already hired to plant bare-root, purchased trees into pots. Two positions at the state nursery were also retained with the grant. DeCorte said her position was also created by the stimulus funds. Others will include tree planters, trainers to be hired for the Spanish-speaking tree care classes, and workers for both the tree inventory and canopy analysis.

The purpose of the tree-planting stimulus project is to increase public awareness of tree benefits, provide tree-care education, involve citizen volunteers in urban forestry programs and increase tree planting.

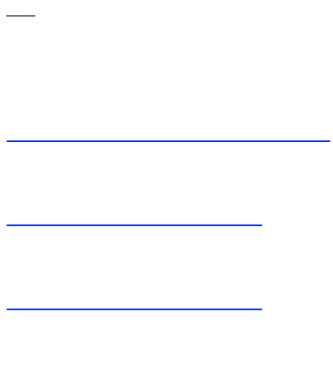
The stimulus funding has paid for the trees, which are at the Las Vegas State [Tree Nursery](#) in northwest Las Vegas. Applications are being accepted from various entities and groups through Aug. 27. The tree planting cannot begin until the fall. The nursery sells trees to private buyers for specific types of projects, such as wildlife habitat, for \$25 each for the 15-gallon size, which is the size of the trees to be used in the tree-planting effort.

DeCorte said no applications have been received yet, but several are in the preparation stages. A panel will review the applications and decide which groups should receive what number of trees, she said. The application is five pages.

The Nursery Greening Project will provide between five and 50 trees per project. If all the trees are not allocated in the first round, a second round will be implemented. Tree varieties include Chinese elm, desert willow and black locust, among others.

All tree-planting projects must be maintained for three years. Criteria used in evaluating the applications include the retention or hiring of positions, the level of increased public awareness of tree benefits, selection and care, and level of social, economic, aesthetic, environmental or education benefits to the community.

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