

Feds approve money for USFS projects

By Ann Westling, US Forest Service

NEVADA CITY â€” Several projects in the Tahoe National Forest will receive funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). Funded projects include road maintenance and watershed restoration; fuel reduction and forest health; reclamation of abandoned mine features; and recreation facility and trail maintenance stated Forest Supervisor Tom Quinn.

More than \$6 million has been received for these Tahoe National Forest projects in the last several months.

â€œThis funding will accomplish important work on the ground for the National Forest resources and provide greater safety for the public. The projects will also put people to work as the majority will be contracted out to private businesses,â€ stated Quinn.

Contractors interested in bidding on ARRA projects can check www.FedBizOps.gov for more information.

Watershed Restoration/Road Maintenance

The watershed/roads projects are located in Sierra County at Perazzo Meadows, midway between Sierraville and Truckee (west of Highway 89) and in Davies/Merrill watersheds, north of Stampede Reservoir, northeast of Truckee. These projects will include road maintenance or road relocation to improve hydrologic interaction between the roads and the watershed as well as other watershed restoration work.

â€œBoth of these projects will extend work already in progress to restore these beautiful and important meadow ecosystems in

Sierra County,â€ stated Quinn.

For Perazzo Meadows, a multi-phase project was designed to restore the meadow ecosystem, relocate the stream channel to its original location and enhance aquatic habitat. Previous funding was used to plan, design, and assess the project. Work is occurring at the site now. This is a joint project between the Tahoe National Forest and the Truckee River Watershed Council.

For the Davies/Merril Watershed project, 13 sites were identified as needing work to restore the hydrologic function of the watershed which was heavily impacted by early day road construction, railroad logging and grazing. Economic Recovery funding will be used to finish the work on the last three sites. This will include improving the drainages along the roads adjacent to the meadows by installing culverts, water crossings, and water bars. It will also remove old railroad grades which have acted like dams constricting the water flow. Economic recovery funding will also be used to gravel road surfaces, reducing sedimentation and to revegetate several sites.

Hazardous Fuel Reduction

Four projects were funded in Sierra County and will be completed through contracts to private companies. The ARRA funding for these four projects will increase the capacity to treat hazardous fuels in Sierra County which could reduce the intensity of a wildfire moving toward the communities of Loyalton Pines, Alleghany and Forest. Work on these projects could begin this fall.

On the Sierraville Ranger District, a 370-acre project will include hand thinning and piling of hazardous fuels adjacent to the small, rural community of Loyalton Pines at the base of a steep, thickly vegetated hillside. The Scraps Defensible Fuel Profile Zone and Mastication projects will thin and

remove hazardous fuels on 700 acres along key forest roads on the eastern side of the Ranger District. Defensible Fuel Profile Zones are designed to extend the fuel break benefits of the roads into the forest, to slow a fast moving wildfire and to provide safer places to fight the fires.

On the Yuba River Ranger District, a project, along the Pliocene Ridge Road between Alleghany and Forest, will reduce the fuels through a variety of treatments on 500 acres. Thinning of small trees, mastication of brush, and chipping and mulching will be used along with hand cutting and piling near the historic Town of Forest.

Abandoned Mine Projects

Fourteen abandoned mine feature reclamation projects have been funded: three in Placer County; four in Nevada County; and seven in Sierra County – in remote areas of the TNF. These projects will address hazardous mine openings by closing adits or shafts or installing bat friendly grates if bats could use them as habitat. Abandoned and unusable equipment will be removed along with any hazardous materials if found.

Crews will also be removing any physical safety hazards such as dangerous structures and restoring steep erosive slopes. For one project, hazardous mine tailings containing lead, arsenic, and mercury will be dug up and removed to a hazardous materials repository. It is expected that these projects will be initiated next field season.

Recreation and Trails Facilities

Funding has also been approved for a variety of recreation maintenance projects including: campground water systems in Yuba and Sierra counties; improving picnic and campground sites in Yuba and Sierra counties; maintaining trails in the Granite Chief Wilderness in Placer County; and removal of a minimally used picnic area in Nevada County. An additional project will repair the septic system at the Emergency Command

Center in Nevada County.

Additional Projects to Improve Forest Health

Several projects have been very recently approved for funding to improve forest health through thinning, mastication of brush and small trees, hand cutting and piling, and mistletoe pruning in Sierra and Placer counties. On the American River Ranger District, near the Placer Big Trees Grove east of Foresthill, over 600 acres will be thinned of brush and small trees. Near the Sugar Pine area north of Foresthill, 1,400 acres of brush and small trees will be removed via mastication. On the Sierraville Ranger District, a 21-acre project will remove trees infected with dwarf mistletoe in the old Cottonwood burn. On the Yuba River Ranger District, north of Downieville, 120 acres of thinning and biomass removal will occur in the old Cap Fire area plus 150 acres of precommercial thinning will occur along Morrystown Ridge.

In addition, along the 25 Road, north of Highway 49, 158 acres will be masticated to reduce the fuels. Hazardous vegetation will be hand piled for future burning on an additional 25 acres along the 25 road. Work on the ground is expected to begin next field season.