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Date: February 11, 2009

Subject: Anticipated 2009 Economic Recovery Bill Data Request

To: Regional Foresters, Station Directors, Area Director, IITF Director, Deputy Chiefs
and WO Directors

REPLY DUE FEBRUARY 20, 2009

When President Obama signs the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA), we will have an incredible opportunity to contribute to this historic national effort, by providing jobs to reduce the threat of catastrophic wildfire to communities and forests across the landscape, improve forest health and move the nation closer to energy independence through the use of woody biomass. However, we are going to be expected to move quickly in creating jobs to aid our weakened economy. To prepare us for this challenge, enclosed is a template to be completed with data from your Region, Station or Area (RSA) listing projects which may receive funding upon enactment of a final version of the Bill. This letter provides direction as to types of data needed in order to ensure that the Agency is prepared to move quickly upon final passage.

Priorities

The major purposes of the ARRA are to create jobs and promote economic recovery, especially to those most impacted by the recession. Agencies are expected to manage and expend funds to accomplish these purposes, with prudent management, and while maintaining the mission of the Agency. Although we are awaiting final language from Congress, it is imperative that the Agency quickly collect appropriate information to demonstrate our ability to meet the goals as expressed by the President.

We anticipate using the information collected from the field to respond to the request for a spending plan within 30 days of the Bill being signed into Law, and to provide the Department with a subset of projects that can be underway within the first seven days of enactment. We will ultimately need more detail on individual projects, but those details can await final passage.

RSAs must ensure that projects submitted for ARRA funding meet as many of these criteria as possible:

- Create or retain jobs in economically distressed areas.
- Create or retain sustainable jobs.
- Create or retain jobs that help sustain the health, diversity and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands.
- Leverage other resources to create more jobs.



- Create jobs that invest in or leverage the investments of partners, in wood-to-energy or biomass projects, or other Administration initiatives intended to help transform urban and rural economies.
- Create jobs that contribute to sustainable operations including reducing footprint of infrastructure and/or greener operations of administrative and recreation sites, roads, trails, fire and other facilities.

Data Template

Instructions for completing the data template are provided in enclosure 2. It is important to note House and Senate conference details are not yet available. We have elected to provide guidance based on the greater flexibility provided in the House version of the bill. We may need to adjust in the final.

Additional Considerations

Partnerships - There is a strong expectation that a portion of the work will be completed by Public Lands Corps, Job Corps, Youth Conservation Corps and other related partnerships that serve young adults. As you develop project lists, opportunities to take advantage of these and other partnership organizations should be considered for on the ground delivery.

Economic Distress and Job Creation Factors - For your assistance in identifying areas of economic distress (per the criteria above) we have created a reference document which can be accessed via the intranet at <http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/results/xfst/local-resources/scripts/pullContent.php?directory=/pdb/Economic%20Recovery/>. Use this document to focus projects in areas of highest unemployment and job loss in your RSA. In addition, job multipliers are being developed which are specific to several different types of work and are specific or by Region. As soon as these are available RSA must apply these criteria and provide the expected number of jobs created by each project.

7 Day Ready Projects - The Secretary has a strong desire for USDA agencies to identify and have ready a suite of projects that could be "acted upon" within seven days of signature of the bill. We are still anticipating that signature will occur on February 16, so these are projects that could be under way by February 23 (ideally obligated), or very shortly thereafter. We need to identify projects in each RSA that we are most comfortable would be high priority, largely ongoing actions that could be augmented with a quick addition of ARRA funds. Please identify these projects in the data template using the Readiness column, option = "seven days".

Project Bundling - To utilize your time and resources efficiently, please submit projects that are not less than \$100,000. Projects can and should be much larger than \$100,000. In addition, Bill language allows Capital Improvement and Maintenance (CI&M) funds to be used for priority road, bridge or trail maintenance and decommissioning, including *related watershed restoration and ecosystem enhancement projects*. This provides authority to use CI&M funds to do a wide array of watershed improvement work, but that work must be in conjunction with an entry into a watershed to do either Roads, Trails, or Facilities projects. On the data template, you will need to identify the Road, Trail, or Facility project that your proposed watershed enhancement project is a companion to.

Current Program of Work - The agency is expected to complete the currently planned FY09 program of work. The WO will work with RSAs to best accomplish this work. Think in terms that best meet the job creation criteria, for example "County wide road decommissioning" which can be identified with a single economic stress indicator and a single job multiplier. Units can track different components of the work to be accomplished through other tools such as work plan, but for this data call that level of detail is not needed.

Data from States - Regional Foresters and the Area Director should contact state foresters to develop grant capability on State and private land. These proposals should be submitted along with the Regions and Area projects.

Direction from Office of Management and Budget- Enclosure 3 is a memo issued on February 9 from the White House Chief of Staff. This is for information and guidance. There will be additional requirements and detail forthcoming from the OMB. As we learn more, we will develop additional guidance.

RSA point of contact - Each RSA should establish an executive level point of contact. These contacts will be the central distribution point for continued communication on ARRA. Please forward your contact's name directly to Dave Dillard.

Your prompt assistance with this information is greatly appreciated. It is imperative that the Forest Service make proper and prudent use of the funds which may be available to provide stimulus to the American economy while maintaining the mission of the Agency. If you have questions, please contact Dave Dillard at 202-205-0787, ddillard@fs.fed.us, or Lenise Lago at 202-205-1088, llago@fs.fed.us. Submissions to this request should be sent directly to Steven Brammer, sbrammer@fs.fed.us.

/s/ Abigail R. Kimbell
ABIGAIL R. KIMBELL
Chief

Enclosures (3)

cc: pdl wo B&F budget coordinators, pdl wo B&F budget officers