



NATIONAL FORESTS IN NORTH • CAROLINA

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NEWS • RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

USDA SECRETARY VILSACK ANNOUNCES ECONOMIC RECOVERY PROJECTS, INCLUDING THE NATIONAL FORESTS IN NORTH CAROLINA

ASHEVILLE— Following the USDA Secretary’s announcement, on July 21, 2009, U.S. Forest Service Chief Tidwell released a list of forest trails and facilities projects funded including approximately \$10 million to fund American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) projects through the National Forests in North Carolina. This is in addition to \$5 million announced in June to fund hazardous fuels, invasive species control, and road and bridge projects.

“The Recovery Act projects we’re announcing today are central to creating jobs and building a better, stronger economy in the future,” said Secretary Vilsack in his announcement. “These projects exemplify President Obama’s commitment to sustainability, reducing our environmental footprint, and increasing energy efficiency, which will benefit the 178 million people who visit the National Forests each year, while generating additional tourism and stimulating local economies.”

Approximately \$12-14 million of the ARRA related work on the National Forests in North Carolina will be accomplished through contracts. Agreements and partnerships with organizations will complement the work accomplished through contracts.

Prospective contractors can find out what ARRA contracts are available by visiting www.FedBizOpps.gov. To locate contracts specific to the National Forests in North

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Carolina click on the “Search Recovery Opportunities” tab and using the “refine results” tab specify “Department of Agriculture, Forest Service” for agency and “EROC east” for location.

Ten new temporary positions will be filled through the National Forests in North Carolina to support ARRA projects. These positions are term positions, lasting at least one and up to three years, and include benefits. Applications for these positions must be made online through www.USAJobs.com. This website contains job descriptions, qualifications, and specific instructions on how to apply.

To locate these jobs as they become available go to <http://jobsearch.usajobs.opm.gov/a9fs.aspx> which takes you directly to FS listings. Under keyword search, type in "arra" which will direct you to all current U.S. Forest Service ARRA jobs advertised nation-wide and those located on the National Forests in North Carolina. Advance outreach notices for these positions are available at all NC Department of Commerce JobLink Career Centers.

These new temporary positions include seven term Forestry Technicians, advertised in the GS-462-5 series including a Fire Squad Boss in Nebo, a Prescribed Fire Fuel Technician in Nebo, two Fire Squad Bosses in Pisgah Forest, and a Fire Crew Boss in Pisgah Forest. A term Biological Scientist position, GS-401-11, and a term Program Support Clerk, GS 303-5, will be located in Asheville. Two civil engineer positions are already in the hiring process and an additional engineer position at the GS-11 level is being advertised.

There were nineteen projects funded to be managed by the National Forests in North Carolina, with multiple parts to most of those projects. The Forest Service Trails System, one category of projects funded, provides access to a wide diversity of users including hikers, horseback riders, mountain bikers, and all-terrain vehicle enthusiasts. Trail

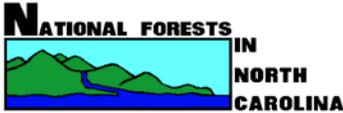
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maintenance includes protecting soils and reducing erosion, along with clearing vegetation, controlling invasive species, and removing downed trees. Repairs and upgrades to trail head and parking areas will improve access and safety for trail users. All of this is labor-intensive work requiring skilled workers to be hired through contracts and agreements under ARRA. See attachment for a complete list of projects and summary descriptions.

Through these projects, the National Forests in North Carolina will be able to address a significant backlog of projects to provide a better and safer recreational experience for forest visitors, further manage natural and cultural resources, and maintain native ecosystems all for benefit of current and future generations. For complete information on the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, reference www.recovery.gov. For information on all USDA economic stimulus projects, reference www.usda.gov/recovery. Information on other Forest Service ARRA projects and related economic recovery can be found at: <http://fs.usda.gov/recovery>.

Please see attachment for a summary table and narrative description of the funded NFsNC ARRA projects.

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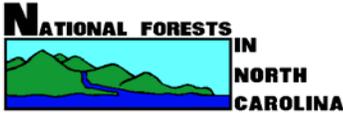


**American Recovery and Reinvestment Act
National Forests in North Carolina
Project List**



The National Forests in North Carolina has received approximately \$15 million in funding for economic stimulus projects. The 19 projects based on funding amount include:

- \$4,925,000 for trail and bridge maintenance to improve public safety and repair resource damage at multiple sites in Carteret, Cherokee, Macon, Madison, Mitchell, Montgomery; Swain, Transylvania and Yancey Counties.
- \$2,820,000 to replace or repair sub standard bridges across the NFsNC including the historic English Chapel Bridge in Transylvania County and Bullpen Bridge in Macon County.
- \$925,000 for replacement of the failing wastewater collection and treatment system at Jackrabbit campground in Clay County.
- \$847,000 for hazardous fuels reduction in Craven and Jones Counties.
- \$734,000 for restoring historic Appalachian trail shelters, Wayah Bald Tower, various fire towers and Pine Cliff picnic shelter in Carteret, Cherokee, Graham, Haywood, Macon, Madison and Yancey counties.
- \$625,000 to repair or replace numerous trail bridges in Macon and Swain Counties.
- \$550,000 for hazardous fuels reduction in Burke, Caldwell and McDowell Counties.
- \$525,000 to replace the Flanners Beach wastewater treatment plant in Craven County.
- \$492,000 for prescribed burning and hazardous fuels reduction in Carteret and Craven Counties.
- \$460,000 for aquatic resource monitoring in the Upper Tellico OHV area in Cherokee County.
- \$400,000 for expansion and improvement of the Ferebee raft and kayak put in/take out site on the Nantahala River in Swain County.
- \$350,000 to pave and make accessible Forest Discovery trail at Cradle of Forestry in Transylvania County.
- \$345,000 for campground and picnic area repairs on the Nantahala NF.
- \$300,000 to repave and improve accessibility of trail and observation platform atop Roan Mountain in Mitchell County.
- \$230,000 to restore the scenic and ecologically important grassy balds at Roan Mountain in Mitchell County.
- \$205,000 to repave FS Road 130 at Roan Mountain in Mitchell County.
- \$200,000 for campground and picnic area repairs in the Uwharrie NF in Montgomery county and within the Croatan National Forest.
- \$120,000 to replace leaking cedar shake roofs on three historic structures at the Cradle of Forestry in Transylvania County.
- \$120,000 to control invasive species on Cheoah River in Graham County.



American Recovery and Reinvestment Act National Forests in North Carolina Project Descriptions



The following list includes the 19 projects approved for the National Forests in North Carolina. They are listed according to resource management objectives, with some overlap between categories.

Trail Projects

The largest ARRA project funded within the National Forests in North Carolina was awarded to trail and trail-bridge projects with a total of \$4,925,000. The goal is to improve public safety and repair resource damage at multiple sites in Carteret, Cherokee, Macon, Madison, Mitchell, Montgomery, Swain, Transylvania and Yancey Counties. Work to be accomplished includes rehabilitating and replacing trail bridges and maintenance of forest hiking, biking, equestrian and off highway vehicle trails. This maintenance work will improve visitor safety and access to the forest and reduce erosion by restoring drainage and stabilizing trails.

Other trail projects include repairing or replacing numerous trail bridges in Macon and Swain Counties for \$625,000. Trail bridges will be rehabilitated, repaired or replaced by this project to ensure resource protection and visitor safety. These trails and associated bridges provide hiking and biking access to many visitors. Replacing unsafe bridges and addressing the deferred maintenance will improve the safety of visitors and their experience. Some of these bridges will also improve accessibility for the disabled.

Recreation Facilities Projects

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act also directs the Forest Service to improve, maintain and renovate public and administrative facilities. As with the trails system, there is currently a large backlog of maintenance needs for forest roads and public facilities. Maintenance needs were identified through extensive studies analyzing the need for specific public facilities to support primary outdoor activities provided on the National Forests and grasslands. Projects funded through ARRA will maintain facilities so that they contribute to safe, high quality outdoor experiences for citizens. Once work is completed these buildings will be more energy efficient, use less water, have a smaller environmental footprint and save taxpayer money.

\$925,000 was awarded for replacement of the failing wastewater collection and treatment system at Jackrabbit Campground in Clay County. The existing 40-year-old wastewater treatment system is nearing the end of its service life. Large segments of the system are prone to leaks that will create health and safety concerns if not addressed. Sewer lines, man holes, and wastewater lift stations will be replaced. The new system will be free of leaks and will be in full compliance with state and federal mandates.

The popular Flanners Beach Campground wastewater treatment plant on the Croatan National Forest in Craven County will also be replaced for \$525,000. This plant is also approximately 40 years old.

Ferebee is a very popular put-in and take-out site for those rafting or kayaking the Nantahala River in Swain County. It is used by numerous outfitter guide operations and by individuals and groups. This project, funded at \$400,000 will replace the existing substandard facility with a new improved and wider area to accommodate the larger rafts and group sizes that are currently using the site. It will also stabilize the stream bank, increase capacity, and make the site fully accessible. These improvements support private sector businesses and their contribution to local short and long term employment and enhance user safety.

The Cradle of Forestry in America historic site is located in Transylvania County and was funded at \$350,000 to pave and make accessible for the disabled one of the interpretive trails on site. This 2-mile trail follows a grassy road bed through the woods. A guided walk along this trail offers visitors a lengthy immersion into the forest. However, it is not wheelchair accessible. Portions of the trail have reached the end of their service life and are in need of repair. Paving this trail will improve accessibility and will continue to provide interpretive learning opportunities for all visitors.

\$345,000 was allocated for campground and picnic area repairs on the Nantahala NF in Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Jackson, Macon counties. This project will address part of a backlog of multiple maintenance activities at facilities across the Forest. Some of the work will include replacing wastewater lift station pumps and controls, water well pumps and controls, and water heaters, installing energy efficient water fixtures, replacing or repairing roofs on existing buildings, lighting in existing structures, waterlines and hydrants, fire rings, lamp posts, and picnic tables in campground areas, and improving sidewalk accessibility at these places. These repairs will bring forest campgrounds up to standard for the visiting public, reducing health risks and improving visitor safety.

In Mitchell County, \$300,000 will go to repave and improve accessibility of the trail and observation platform atop Roan Mountain. This project will rehabilitate and repave the existing trail from the upper parking lot near the Visitor Center to the elevated platform or observation deck, increasing the trail's safety and reducing erosion and sedimentation. The existing observation deck has reached the end of its service life and is beginning to pose some safety issues. It will be replaced in-kind. Implementation of this project will result in better accessibility and improved safety.

In the Uwharrie National Forest in Montgomery County, and within the Croatan National Forest, \$200,000 will address campground and picnic area repairs. This project will address part of a backlog of multiple maintenance activities at recreation facilities. Some of the work will include replacing wastewater lift station pumps and controls, water well pumps and controls, and water heaters, installing energy efficient water fixtures, replacing or repairing roofs on existing buildings, lighting in existing structures, waterlines and hydrants, fire rings, lamp posts, and picnic tables in campground recreation areas, and improving sidewalk accessibility at these places. These repairs will

bring forest campgrounds up to standard for the visiting public, reducing health risks and improving visitor safety.

\$205,000 will be used to repave National Forest System Road 130 leading to Roan Mountain in Mitchell County. This is a very popular route for forest visitors. The facilities near the road were upgraded several years ago. This project will repave the road at the top of the mountain, adding the requirements to be able to delineate two lanes. Completion of the project will result in a smooth surface, providing a safer passage and better visitor access.

Ecosystem Projects

Several projects directly address the health and restoration of native ecosystems. Within the ecosystem restoration realm, \$230,000 was designated to help restore Roan Mountain grassy balds. Grassy balds represent a very rare plant community, and the balds atop Roan Mountain are generally regarded as the most extensive and pristine grassy bald plant communities across the Southern Appalachian chain. The balds provide habitat for 10 regionally rare species and numerous locally rare species. However, due to a lack of disturbance and management, trees and shrubs and blackberries have encroached on the balds, which currently occupy less than 25% of their former area. Workers employed on this project will use mowers or weed-eaters to remove encroaching blackberry plants and shrubby growth to restore this native ecosystem. The Cherokee National Forest, Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, US Fish and Wildlife Service, The Nature Conservancy, and North Carolina Natural Heritage Program are partners. Implementation of this project will restore an endangered plant community, as well as suitable habitat for Gray's lily.

Along the Cheoah River in Graham County, \$120,000 will be used to control invasive plant species. There are 12 non-native invasive species on the Cheoah River banks or in the river which are impacting two federally listed species: *Virginia Spiraea*, a federally threatened shrub, and the Appalachian Elktoe, a federally endangered mussel. The project area will be nine miles of river, from one dam to the next reservoir, adjacent to Alcoa Power Generating's Tapoca Hydroelectric project. The locations of the non-native invasive species are already known. Contractors will treat those with aquatic approved herbicides. The benefits will include a weed-free river that will be more pleasant for white-water rafters and protecting federally listed species.

A total of \$460,000 was funded for aquatic resource monitoring in the Upper Tellico OHV area in Cherokee County. This project involves implementing a resource monitoring plan to evaluate the effects of Forest Service management actions on aquatic habitat and associated water quality and quantity within the Tellico watershed. This work will include field data collection and physical measurements of stream channels, including changes in fish populations. Monitoring will evaluate the success or failure of management decisions and guide future actions in the Upper Tellico River watershed. Multiple partners are involved, including the Tennessee Valley Authority, the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, who will assist with trout population monitoring and the North Carolina Division of Water Quality, which will conduct aquatic macroinvertebrate monitoring. These efforts are part of the larger effort to monitor conditions in the Upper Tellico River watershed and restore the health of the landscape.

Historic Resources Projects

Across the National Forests in North Carolina are also historic buildings and Civilian Conservation Corps era structures. To address preservation of these significant components of North Carolina public lands, three projects were funded through ARRA. At the Cradle of Forestry in America in Transylvania County, three leaking cedar shake roofs on three historic structures will be replaced for \$120,000. The 6,500-acre site in the Pink Beds valley in North Carolina was established as a Forest Service historic site by Congress in 1968 and contains the first official school for forestry in America -- the Biltmore Forest School. The new cedar shake roofs will be in keeping with the integrity of the historic buildings. In addition, by stopping the leaks it will protect and extend the life of the facility which can be utilized by visitors for many years into the future.

One project for \$734,000 includes historic trail shelters on the Appalachian Trail and one, Pine Cliff, on the Croatan National Forest, which have deferred maintenance needs. Also included in this project, there are some fire towers which need roofs repaired and new doors, windows, and screens as well as repairs to stairs, structure, and floors in the tower cabs. These historic structures will be accurately repaired and restored for future generations. The safety for visitors will also be greatly improved. These projects are located in Carteret, Cherokee, Graham, Haywood, Macon, Madison and Yancey counties.

Across the National Forests in North Carolina, multiple sub-standard bridges will be replaced and/or repaired for \$2,820,000. This will include replacing several bridges and performing structural repairs to two Civilian Conservation Corps-era historic steel truss bridges, English Chapel bridge in Transylvania County, also allowing access to a local church, and Bull Pen bridge in Macon County. The historic bridges will be restored in order to improve their load capacity while protecting their historic integrity. The other bridges are at the end of their service life, not wide enough and do not have enough clearance between the current bridge and the stream, causing the water to block the road during periods of high stream flow. This project will improve all-weather access to the forest, improve safety and load capacity of the bridges, extend the lives of the historic bridges and address substantial backlog maintenance.

Fire Management Projects

Wildland fire management is a significant part of the work done by the U.S. Forest Service. \$847,000 was approved for hazardous fuels reduction in Craven and Jones Counties. This project reduces fuel build up on the Croatan through mechanical treatments. It may involve chipping and reducing the density of flammable material near private property areas that are at high risk to damaging, high-severity fires. It will also create more fire breaks to further protect private property by discouraging the spread of fire.

An additional \$550,000 will be utilized for the same type of hazardous fuels reduction efforts in Burke, Caldwell, and McDowell counties. This project will also address refurbishing National Forest boundary lines as will the projects in Cravens and Jones counties.

In Carteret and Craven counties, approximately 9,000 acres will be treated with prescribed fire each year for two years for \$492,000 to restore and maintain Longleaf Pine savannas. This will maintain optimal habitat for Red Cockaded woodpeckers and Rough leaf loosestrife, both federally listed species. As savannas are properly maintained, hazardous fuels in the area are reduced, which diminishes the risk of damaging wildfire adjacent to wildland urban interface communities. There will also be some mechanical fuel reduction work on national forest lands as part of this project. The Forest has a mandate to provide critical habitat. This is following the Fish and Wildlife Service recovery plan for both federally listed species. It will also reduce the amount of hazardous fuels adjacent to private lands.