

News Release

CLEVELAND NATIONAL FOREST

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Laguna Mountain Air Force Base Selected for Decommissioning as an Economic Recovery Project

San Diego, July 31, 2009... Regional Forester Randy Moore and Cleveland National Forest Supervisor Will Metz announced the inclusion of the decommissioning of the vacant Laguna Mountain Air Force Base funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) for Forest Facilities and Trails that were announced by Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack on July 21, 2009. The 191 projects, funded by ARRA at more than \$274 million, are located throughout National Forest System lands in 32 states.

The decommissioning of the Laguna Mountain Air Force Base on the Descanso Ranger District is a multi-million dollar project that will take several years to complete. The Base operated atop Laguna Mountain in San Diego County from the late 1940s to 1981. Since 1985, the vacant site has deteriorated to the point that removal of the remaining buildings and infrastructure, and returning the site to its pre-use condition is the only viable management alternative.

The funding will allow the Cleveland National Forest to establish contracts with private vendors to complete the project. Work will include securing the Base so that it no longer poses a threat to the health and safety of national forest visitors, removal of hazardous materials such as asbestos and lead paint, and demolition of several buildings and utility systems. The site will then be restored to a natural forested setting.

“We are very pleased to receive funding under ARRA for this project,” said Metz. “This site has posed a serious hazard to national forest visitors for over 20 years, and we have struggled to find the financial means to restore the area to its natural ecosystem. The site has some of the largest pine trees that exist on Laguna Mountain and it will make for a very enjoyable site for visitors once the project is complete.” Additionally, the Forest Service plans to construct an interpretive display that highlights the history of the Air Force’s use of the site and its relevance to the Cold War era.

The ARRA projects are central to creating jobs and building a better, stronger economy in the future, said Vilsack. “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.”

For more information on the Laguna Mountain project and photos of the existing site, please visit: <http://www.fs.fed.us/r5/cleveland/projects/lagunaafb/index.shtml> Information on other Forest Service ARRA projects and related economic recovery visit: http://fs.usda.gov/economic_recovery.