

Release No. 0430.09

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**AGRICULTURE SECRETARY VILSACK ANNOUNCES ECONOMIC RECOVERY PROJECTS FOR FOREST HEALTH PROTECTION** 78 projects in 20 States and the District of Columbia will receive a total of \$89 million to address problems caused by fire, insects, invasive species and disease

WASHINGTON, September 9, 2009 — Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced projects funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) for forest health protection projects. These 78 projects will receive almost \$89 million and are located on forested lands in 30 states. This funding will be used to restore forest health conditions on Federal, State, and private forest and rangelands recovering from fires, forest insects and disease outbreaks. These conditions weaken affected lands and threaten the benefits these lands provide, including clean water, clean air, habitat for wildlife, resistance to wildfire, and recreational opportunities for the public.

"These Recovery Act projects will put people to work and advance the Obama Administration's vision for a balanced and cooperative approach to forest management that will provide for public health and safety by restoring forestlands and rangelands damaged by insects, disease, and invasive species," said Vilsack. "Proper forest management helps protect our forests for the benefit of current and future generations by restoring the vitality and productivity of the land."

These Recovery Act funds will be used to complete high priority projects to restore forest health and resiliency by reducing insect and disease problems. Among the projects announced today will be efforts to thin understory trees and control spread of pests, which will reduce the risk of massive forest die-offs. Epidemic insect outbreaks, such as hemlock woody adelgid, Asian longhorn beetle and bark beetles have killed large expanses of forests and threaten to kill more. Additionally, workers will undertake efforts to control the spread of invasive plants by hand and with machinery, thus protecting and restoring healthy ecosystems. Invasive plants such as Cogan Grass, leafy spurge and cheatgrass threaten ecosystems by out-competing and displacing native plants.

Finally, the funds will also help provide technical and financial assistance for care of lands owned by States, local governments, private organizations, and private individuals. These activities will protect highly valued forested areas, reduce the risks of vegetation mortality, increase landscape resilience, and prevent future disease and insect outbreaks.

A listing of the forest health protection projects and information on other Forest Service ARRA projects can be found at <http://fs.usda.gov/recovery>.

Wildland Fire Management - Forest Health (by State)

Alaska – 5 projects – \$3,911,000

Arizona – 4 projects – \$3,638,000

California – 4 projects – \$10,710,000

Colorado – 1 project – \$1,500,000

District of Columbia – 2 – \$2,782,000

Delaware – 1 project – \$895,000

Florida – 1 project – \$1,570,000

Georgia – 1 project – \$897,000

Iowa – 1 project – \$449,000

Idaho – 5 projects – \$4,403,700

Illinois – 2 projects – \$2,872,000

Massachusetts – 1 project – \$4,487,000

Maryland – 2 projects – \$1,974,000

Michigan – 2 projects – \$2,443,000

Mississippi – 1 project – \$897,000

Montana – 5 projects – \$3,923,000

North Carolina – 4 projects – \$2,802,000

New Jersey – 4 projects – \$1,975,000

Nevada – 1 project – \$494,000

New York – 1 project – \$763,000

Oregon – 11 projects – \$17,432,000

Pennsylvania – 2 projects – \$2,154,000

Rhode Island – 1 project – \$449,000

South Carolina – 1 project – \$897,000

Tennessee – 1 project – \$160,000

Virginia – 2 projects – \$1,076,000

Vermont – 1 project – \$567,000

Washington – 7 projects – \$4,732,000

Wildland Fire Management - Forest Health (Multi-state)

Alaska; California; Oregon; Washington; Hawaii – 1 project – \$1,795,000

California; Hawaii – 1 project – \$2,190,000

California; Oregon – 1 project – \$2,240,000

Michigan; Ohio – 1 project – \$2,244,000

**Total – 78 projects - \$89,321,700**

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