



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **USDA HIGHLIGHTS IMPACT OF RECOVERY ACT ON RURAL AMERICA ARRA Funds Enabled the First Training of its Kind,**

WASHINGTON, Feb. 17, 2010 – Today, the U.S. Department of Agriculture highlighted the successes of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). One year after the passage of ARRA, evidence is clear – and growing by the day – that the Recovery Act is working to cushion the greatest economic crisis since the Great Depression and lay a new foundation for economic growth.

"President Obama's Recovery Act has helped to create jobs and lay a new foundation for economic growth during the greatest economic crisis since the Great Depression," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "USDA has used Recovery Act funding create badly-needed jobs and stimulate local economies, help farmers and rural businesses make it through tough times, ensure that struggling families can put food on the table, and build and revitalize critical infrastructure in rural communities across America."

In September 2009, ARRA funds created the Ohio Woodland Job Corps. The two-year program employs two groups of 66 conservation workers at nine state forests to remove invasive species from state forestlands, while receiving job training in tree identification, wildfire fighting, and herbicide application.

Individuals hired through the program received four weeks of training in safety techniques, tree identification, chainsaw training, wildfire fighting, logging techniques, and pesticide safety and certification. After completing training, corps members began working on State Forests to treat and remove invasive species. In addition, crews assist with forest inventory work, timber stand improvement activities, trail maintenance and construction, and some tree planting activities.

As a national AmeriCorps Education Award Program affiliated project, members are eligible to receive up to \$2,300 towards past or future technical education or college expenses

When the program is completed, Ohio will have an increased number of certified herbicide applicators, wildfire fighters, and potential Master Loggers. The successful partnership between the Ohio Division of Forestry, U.S. Forest Service and the Natural Resource Conservation Service identified a need for timber stand improvement vendors to assist private landowners improve the health of their woodlots. With the training and experience these crews have received, they could easily fill that need.

Since the Recovery Act was signed into law a year ago, USDA has moved quickly to get dollars out the door. Aside from funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, which is allocated on a mandatory basis each month, USDA has announced the vast majority of its remaining \$7.9 billion to support more than 90,000 grants, loans, and other job-creating projects. In the first year implementing the Recovery Act, USDA has:

- Provided over \$100 billion in tax relief for American businesses and families, including tax cuts for 95 percent of working families through the Making Work Pay tax Credit. And tax relief is expected to nearly double in the coming months.
- Helped over 38 million Americans who need food assistance by providing an average increase in benefits of \$80 per month to low-income households of four. This funding is a fast-acting economic stimulus as every \$1 in food benefits generates up to \$1.84 in total economic activity, supporting jobs at all levels of the food chain.
- Helped 85,420 rural Americans purchase or repair their homes with affordable loans while simultaneously stimulating the economy, and creating jobs in the construction and real estate sectors.
- Helped create private sector jobs protecting rural communities from large wildfires, while improving the health of our forests, water and air resources. We provided \$500 million to treat over 134,000 acres of forest to reduce the risk of wildfire.
- Provided 2,636 loans to farmers and ranchers help them purchase the farm equipment, feed, seed, and fuel they needed to keep their farms operating and support jobs in the rural economy. Approximately half of these loans went to beginning farmers and 25% to socially disadvantaged farmers.
- Created green jobs at plants that use of wood from forest restoration activities to generate renewable energy. Grants worth \$50 million went to projects that will power 223,000 homes.
- Helped more than 5,000 schools purchase equipment to improve the safe and healthy meals they serve to children.

In the coming months, USDA will be implementing additional programs and projects as weather begins to thaw, and construction projects are expected to break ground across the country. In 2010, USDA will continue to invest in projects to help get Americans and the economy back to work:

- By bringing broadband internet to an estimated 1.2 million households, 230,000 businesses, and 7,800 anchor institutions like hospitals and schools across rural America, in one largest job generating efforts to date. This \$3.4 billion

investment will give businesses access to global markets and spur rural economic development.

- By helping 300 rural businesses grow, innovate and create jobs, providing \$900 million on top of \$570 million already at work helping 160 businesses across the country.
- With the construction and improvement of hundreds of community facilities, such as police and fire stations, and libraries in rural America. We will improve access to health care for 3 million rural residents, and educational services for 2.5 million residents. We will provide nearly \$750 million on top of \$470 million already announced for more than 850 projects.
- By constructing and rebuilding water and waste water systems in more than 200 communities affecting 1 million rural Americans. We will provide nearly \$1 billion on top of more than \$2 billion already announced for projects in 530 communities.

More information about USDA's Recovery Act efforts is available at [www.usda.gov/recovery](http://www.usda.gov/recovery). Log on to USDA's YouTube channel to view additional ARRA project highlights, videos are available at <http://www.youtube.com/usda#g/c/2A468F5AC6EBCED.7>

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