

Stimulus-Funded BLM Projects Benefit Rural Economy

Thanks to funding provided by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), also known as the Stimulus, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Safford Field Office has been able to support employment in the Gila Valley of southeastern Arizona. In some cases, this has allowed local contractors to keep staff working during times of slowdowns. These ARRA projects – all 14 of them – are also helping to address ongoing resource problems, such as erosion and invasive plants expansion on the public lands.

“The funding we received locally has really been a win-win for everyone,” said Scott Cooke, BLM Safford Field Manager. “It’s really great that we are able to provide some additional support to the local economy. And, at the same time, we are making public lands managed by the BLM healthier and safer for the public to enjoy. Some of the projects involving erosion-control structures and invasive plant control on public land will benefit adjacent private land as well.”

More than 1.4 million dollars was allocated to the BLM Safford office for these projects. Many of the projects are intended to resolve long-standing erosion problems. In some cases, older erosion-control structures were badly in need of maintenance but no funding had been available until now. In other situations, such as in the Aravaipa Canyon watershed, new projects are being started to reduce runoff and sedimentation.



Another project involves the eradication of invasive plants. Target species include nonnatives such as Russian knapweed and invasive natives like mesquite and catclaw acacia. Restoring healthy grasslands is a goal in many of the treatment areas while reducing salt cedar invasion is a goal in riparian areas. Other ARRA projects include repairing and replacing damaged fences, placing a gate across a bat cave to restrict human access, and enhancing fish and wildlife habitat.



Local businesses were successful in securing contracts for the ARRA projects. CKC Construction of Safford was awarded three of the contracts totaling more than a half million dollars. Brian Cluff, General Manager of CKC, appreciated the opportunity to bid on the contracts and to work with the BLM on projects that will benefit the Gila Valley.

“The money and work generated from these contracts enabled us to keep more employees working full time,” said Cluff. “It helped fill in between some of our larger projects.”

Other contractors came from throughout Arizona. One contract was awarded to a service-disabled, veteran-owned company whose owner commented that he rarely sees these opportunities. Contracts awarded to out-of-town businesses resulted in benefits to the local economy through purchases of food, lodging, and gasoline.



Funding and contractors for BLM Safford Field Office ARRA projects include:

- \$187,600 – CKC Construction of Safford to repair the Oso Largo Erosion-Control Structure
- \$216,476 – CKC Construction to repair the Goat Well Erosion-Control Structure
- \$109,849 – Schuck Development of Wickenburg to repair the Red Knolls Erosion-Control Structure
- \$124,214 – PLS Group of Thatcher to construct 17 miles of fence in the San Simon Watershed
- \$ 20,000 – CPS, Inc. of Phoenix for control of Russian knapweed near Duncan and \$175,998 for other vegetation treatments
- \$ 59,990 – Sollers Construction of Central for Aravaipa erosion-control work
- \$ 45,600 – Snow Development of Tucson for Gila Box invasive plant control
- \$ 79,400 – Freeport-McMoRan Copper and Gold in Morenci to construct and install a bat cave gate
- \$102,560 – CKC Construction to replace or install 30 culverts along Haekel Road
- \$104,896 – Marsh Development of Sonoita to install a solar pump at Hot Well Dunes
- \$ 64,570 – Piedmont Environment of North Carolina for riparian habitat enhancement at Posey Well
- \$ 18,848 – John Blood of Flagstaff for installation of erosion-control wattles south of Safford
- \$ 21,564 – Jackson's Landscaping and Excavation Service, LLC, of Payson for salt cedar removal along Sands Draw
- \$ 43,800 – Dana Jackson of Sierra Vista to dredge, recontour, and plant native vegetation to restore more than a mile of riparian and aquatic habitat along Sands Draw
- \$ 49,976 – N&B Fence Co. LLC, of McNeal for repair and replacement of more than seven miles of fences at Ryan Dike, South Well, Big Springs, and Fourmile Canyon Campground

Much of the work described above has already been completed. If you have any questions about these projects, please call the BLM Safford Field Office at 928-348-4400.

Fact sheets with more information about each of the ARRA-funded projects can be viewed on the Department of the Interior's website: <http://recovery.doi.gov/press/bureaus/bureau-of-land-management/blm-fact-sheets/blm-arizona-fact-sheets/>

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