

# STIMULUS CASH

Winter resorts can tap into hundreds of millions of dollars in grants and loans.

By Andy Spielman

While much has been made of the “shovel ready” public works projects eligible to receive federal stimulus funds, many of these same funds are available to private businesses, including ski areas. You create jobs; you are major economic contributors in your communities; and your operations fuel local, state and national economies.

On February 17, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA, aka the Stimulus Bill) became law. This law aims to stimulate American businesses and create jobs by quickly pump-

ing the better part of a trillion dollars into the national economy. Many of these funds will be spent by the government itself, but significant funds will flow to the private sector from both federal agencies and their state counterparts. The hope is that these near-term investments in transportation, energy efficiency, environmental protection, and other infrastructure projects will provide long-term economic benefits.

Since the short-term intent of ARRA is to provide a jolt to our economy, the Act provides short timeframes in which funds must be spent. This presents a unique opportunity for those businesses able to qualify as recipients—that is, apply quickly and put the funds to use.

Below is a summary of the ARRA programs that most greatly benefit ski areas:

**Forest Maintenance: \$500 million.**

ARRA appropriates \$500 million for Forest Service project grants to the states for activities designed to improve the health of national forests and reduce fire risk. Of

this total, \$250 million is dedicated to projects on state and private lands that will reduce hazardous fuels, enhance forest system health, and improve forest ecosystems.

**Forest Infrastructure: \$2.5 billion.**

The Forest Service will allocate \$650 million in ARRA grants to states for projects to improve and maintain forest infrastructure, including roads, bridges, trails, and facilities. These funds may also be used for ecosystem enhancement and watershed restoration projects. The Act also dedicates \$1.3 billion for similar infrastructure maintenance and construction on BLM lands, National Parks, and National Wildlife Refuges. In addition, ARRA appropriates \$550 million to the Department of Transportation for restoration, repair, and construction of highways on Federal lands.

**Efficient Energy: \$9.1 billion.**

ARRA appropriates \$3.1 billion for state programs that promote energy conservation and reduce energy demand, and \$6 billion

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## economy\_>

to the Department of Energy to guarantee loans for efficient energy projects that reduce air pollutants or employ green technologies. Additionally, ARRA extends the federal "production tax credit" and offers an alternative "investment tax credit" equal to 30 percent of the cost of a qualified facility that generates electricity by wind, biomass, geothermal, hydropower, and other alternative sources.

**Airport Improvements: \$1.1 billion.** ARRA earmarked \$1.1 billion for discretionary project grants to airports. The Federal Aviation Administration selects recipients, and funds may be used to improve facilities or enhance the safety and security of airports.

**Water Funding: \$8.38 billion.** ARRA set aside \$4 billion for Clean Water and \$2 billion for Drinking Water State Revolving funds, as well as \$1.38 billion in additional funding for rural water and waste disposal programs. The Act appropriates an additional \$1 billion to state agencies for reclamation, treatment, and other water projects. These funds are distributed either by the states or the Rural Utilities Service.

**Small Business: \$630 million.** ARRA appropriates over \$630 million for guaranteed loans to small businesses. These loans are issued by the Small Business Administration, and recipients may expand or improve their businesses by upgrading or purchasing land, facilities, or equipment. The Act also reduces or eliminates fees typically associated with federally-guaranteed small business loans.

**Broadband: \$7.2 billion.** The Act allocates \$4.7 billion for broadband expansion to underserved areas, and another \$2.5 billion for expansion to rural areas.

**Employee Training: \$2.7 billion.** \$1.95 billion will go to the states for workforce training and employment services for both youths and adults. An additional \$750 million is dedicated to programs to prepare workers for high-growth jobs, primarily in renewable and efficient energy. ■

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