



## Back Country Horsemen of America

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February 28, 2009

### ALERT ALERT ALERT

TO ALL BCHA MEMBERS!

This letter is intended to give an update of trails funding opportunities provided under the Stimulus package that provides Back Country Horsemen of America members major opportunities to seek projects that would qualify to submit for consideration. **At this time there is \$2.5 billion scheduled to go to the BLM, USFS, NPS and US Fish and Wildlife agencies.** These funds are over and above the Congressional Appropriations for current operations. Although the specific project allocations have not been finalized, the process is on a fast track to get funds to those projects that will provide (1) immediate job opportunities where people can be hired, subcontracted and (2) start to work immediately. The agencies are all, as we speak, trying to determine projects to submit on those that are “shovel ready“ where the environmental work is complete, where contracts can be let and people hired immediately.

The significance to Back Country Horsemen is the immediate opportunity to get substantial amounts of this money to the ground for trails reconstruction and maintenance. Consequently, the urgency of getting this notice out to all our members is to aggressively seek a large number of project proposals that can be submitted to help work off the huge backlog of deferred trails maintenance and reconstruction. Since this has placed a huge demand on the agencies staff to do in a short period of time, Back Country Horsemen have an opportunity to weigh in and advocate trails projects we have knowledge of that can be submitted to the agencies for consideration for funding.

The time is short--90 days for review and selection of projects!

- For example, of the USFS \$650 million piece of \$2.5 allocation the expectation is that approximately \$100 million could go to trails!
- The NPS will get \$ 750 million for operations, trails and maintenance, and an additional \$170 million for roads.
- The BLM will get \$320 million for critical maintenance backlog.
- The Fish and Wildlife will get \$280 million for refuges and hatcheries.
- The USFS and DOI will get \$515 million for fire suppression but have to our knowledge not yet determined the priorities, but each have the substantial amounts of new money that will be available.

This is a huge opportunity for Back Country Horsemen to take advantage of a one time opportunity to seek support for projects we all know that have been ignored for years with the excuse —“no money is available”. It is also perhaps a greater opportunity to work with our partners in all the land management agencies and youth groups to help identify and scope projects that will need to be quickly identified and submitted. Since the work force in all agencies has suffered, it may be appropriate to propose with some of the youth groups such as Northwest Youth Corps, SCEA, Boy Scouts or California or Montana Conservation Corps, and others who may be appropriate to help the ranking and evaluation with a youth component in place.

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We are sure the competition will be strong for projects and the time is very short, but this is not pending legislation or a proposed plan—as you know it has been signed into law. Our volunteer organization is in a unique position to help meet the challenges of fast tracking the implementation of this piece of legislation.

As a start, it could be suggested that each unit or chapter meet to identify a list of potential candidate projects then meet with the Ranger Districts, Forest Supervisors, BLM field or District offices and NPS Superintendents Park headquarters to insure we are a part of the planning project and to insure we are involved in the selection of needed important projects.

We realize the time constraints, the challenges responding to this request and understanding of the details of this stimulus legislation exist, yet the opportunities to be involved in how and when this money is spent is extremely important to the trails community at all levels.

Back Country Horsemen of America has written and hand delivered a letter of support to the Chief of the Forest Service with a request that substantial amounts of this money go to trails. Back Country Horsemen are involved and with the active participation by every member, affiliate, unit/chapter and state organization, we will help insure that this money will be prioritized and allocated with our input.

If there are any questions regarding any of this, please call. We will try to help.

Sincerely,

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