



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Southeastern Colorado Watershed Projects Receives Nearly \$1.1 Million in Stimulus Funding**

**Lakewood, Colo., April 27, 2009**—As a result of President Obama’s American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009, Secretary of Agriculture Vilsack recently announced over \$3.6 million in assistance to improve water quality, increase water supply, decrease soil erosion, and improve fish and wildlife habitat in rural communities of Colorado. A total of five Colorado watershed projects were approved for funding, including the Limestone-Graveyard Creeks, the Holbrook Lake Ditch, the Highline Breaks, and the Trinidad Lake North Watershed Projects, each located in the southeastern part of the State.

*“The news from Secretary Vilsack is very exciting for farmers and ranchers in Southeast Colorado. NRCS dollars are some of the most valuable tools farmers and ranchers have to ensure the most efficient use of water in our arid lands, which inevitably protects the sustainability of our rural communities. I congratulate the projects awarded on their commitment to agriculture and conservation in Southeast Colorado,”* stated Congressman John Salazar.

The four projects encompass some 288,000 acres within Pueblo, Otero, Bent, Prowers, and Las Animas counties and contain nearly 950 farms. Each watershed received the requested amount needed to complete each project totaling around \$1.1 million, which will be used to improve water quality, improve irrigation system efficiencies, and reduce irrigation-induced erosion.

*“We are very pleased to have all five Colorado projects funded,”* states Allen Green, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist, Lakewood, CO. *“They have been in the works in varying stages within the last five to 10 years and then funding came to a halt. It is good to see a re-emphasis on these large-scale conservation efforts.”* NRCS is a federal agency within the Department of Agriculture, which manages and administers the technical and financial assistance for these watershed projects.

*“President Obama is committed to improving water quality, creating more dependable water supplies, and decreasing soil erosion; and this funding will make a big difference in the lives of the people who live in these rural communities,”* Vilsack said.

In addition to the natural resource concerns these funds will help to address, the USDA is directing technical and financial assistance available through ARRA funding toward projects that are ready to begin and that will relieve stress on local economies through the creation of over 1,400 jobs.

The funding for the four projects in southeastern Colorado will create 51 land treatment contracts with mostly family-owned farms and ranchers. Many of these contracts will contain the installation of various conservation management practices, as well as structures which require labor to install and/or implement.

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When the projects are completed, the nearly 13,100 residents and 180,000 visitors to the area will be significantly impacted. Research indicates that these watershed improvement measures will result in the reduction of sediment transported into the Arkansas River by 60,000 tons per year, and into the Trinidad Lake by 61%. There will also be a significant reduction of nitrates, selenium, and salts leached into surface and groundwater sources within the watersheds. This increased sustainability of irrigated agricultural activities will benefit the local economies by nearly \$500,000 annually, and will help to sustain a \$10 million contribution as habitat improvements for the Trinidad Lake Fishery are maintained.

NRCS partners with numerous entities including the Bent, Prowers, East Otero, West Otero, and Spanish Peaks Purgatoire River Conservation Districts; as well as the Fort Lyon Canal Company, the Holbrook Mutual Irrigation Company, the Purgatoire River Conservancy District, the Las Animas Board of Commissioners, The City of Trinidad, and the Colorado State Conservation Board to successfully implement and complete these projects.

For additional information about the Limestone-Graveyard Creeks, the Holbrook Lake Ditch, the Highline Breaks, or the Trinidad Lake North Watershed Projects, please contact Lorenz Sutherland, La Junta area office at 719-384-5408 (all watershed projects); Cindy Schleining, Las Animas field office at 719-456-0120 ext. 3 (Limestone-Graveyard Creeks); Tim Macklin, Lamar field office at 719-336-9059 ext. 3 (Limestone-Graveyard Creeks); David Miller, Rocky Ford field office at 719-254-7672 ext. 3 (Holbrook Lake Ditch and Highline Breaks); and Levi Montoya, Trinidad field office at 719-846-3681 ext. 3 (Trinidad Lake North Watershed).

Funding provided through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 is part of the Obama Administration's plans to modernize the nation's infrastructure, jumpstart the economy, and create jobs. For more information on the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, visit [www.recovery.gov](http://www.recovery.gov).

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