



# WHITE MOUNTAIN APACHE TRIBE

## ARRA Project News

October 2010 Issue

### QUOTATION CORNER

*"I am grateful for an opportunity to continue to work on the damages inflicted by wildfire, it is important to me from a cultural aspect as well as an American..."*

J. Armstrong

*"This has been a great new opportunity for me to learn new things and become more active with other departments and the environment. I have also matured and gained some valuable jobs skills..."*

I. Perez— College Student

### WMAT ARRA Project Team Members

Rachel Endfield,  
ARRA Projects Coordinator

Daniel Kessay,  
Field Operations  
Manager

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WMAT Forestry Director

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WMAT Project Specialist

### WMAT Tribal Overview

The federally recognized (June 7, 1897) White Mountain Apache Tribe (WMAT) is governed by a constitution and by-laws that authorize the governing body to enter into agreements and contracts with the federal government on behalf of the Tribe. The Tribal Government is represented by eleven (11) tribally-elected leaders; consisting of a Chairman, Vice-Chairperson, and nine (9) Tribal Council Members. As one of the top ten U.S. Tribal Nations in population demographics (over 15,000); the Tribe is comprised of 15 communities located on the 113-milelong by 75-mile wide land area.

The Fort Apache reservation offers diverse ecology and considerable biodiversity as its entire land base consists of 1.67 million acres (over 2,600 square miles) and ranges in elevation from 2,600 feet in the Salt River



Canyon on the southwest corner of the reservation to over 11,400 feet at the top of Mount Baldy; one of the Tribe's sacred peaks. The WMAT ecological systems includes one of the richest wildlife habitats in the state of Arizona and has more than 400 miles of streams; home to the Apache Trout, a species brought back from the brink of extinction by the Tribe and many partners. The Tribe also offers many recreational opportunities throughout the reservation through its Wildlife and Outdoor Recreation Division.

Prior to the devastating 2003 Rodeo Chediski Fire; the Fort Apache Reservation was one of the most productive forestlands in the Southwest. Moreover and because the Tribe is dependent upon its timber as a source of employment, income, and subsistence; forest restoration is critical to the economic, social, cultural, and environmental well-being of the Tribe.

Therefore and as a result, the WMAT ARRA Projects were initiated to manage almost \$8 million in funding that was awarded to the Tribe for building sustainable forest-based businesses that will assist with forest and watershed restoration efforts, as well as create long-term employment opportunities and help rebuild the Tribe's economic infrastructure.

### WMAT ARRA PROJECT OVERVIEW

Once a thriving forest-based industry Tribe, the WMAT fell victim to one of the nations largest and most devastating wild fires in the summer of 2003. The Rodeo-Chediski fire destroyed 280,992 acres or 35% of the WMAT's forested lands. Moreover and because the WMAT's economic base is primarily dependent upon the timber industry for jobs; the detrimental effects of the fire just added to the already high unemployment rate, which averages 80% on the Fort Apache reservation.

Therefore and as a result of the devastating effects of the Rodeo-Chediski fire, the

WMAT is only a handful of Tribes in the nation to receive Recovery funds.

Moreover, both the USDA Forest Service, Southwestern Region and the Apache-Sitgreaves NF were instrumental in helping the WMAT Forestry Department prepare the grants that resulted in the Recovery funding awards and both are continuing to assist in the oversight of the Tribe's ARRA Projects. "Without the FS, we would not be able to succeed in pursuing our vision for a better economic future for our Tribe and for this we are grateful!" shares Rachel Endfield, ARRA Projects Coordinator.

The Recovery Funds

support three (3) WMAT ARRA Projects, including: (1) the Tribal Forest Protection Act (TFPA) Project; (2) the Hazardous Fuels / Restoration Project; and (3) a State-of-The-Art Native Plant Nursery Project.

This is the "dawn of new era" for the Tribe and the WMAT ARRA Projects Team is looking forward to making a difference and positively impacting the WMAT's future generations for years to come.



## WMAT NATIVE PLANT NURSERY

The WMAT received a \$2,243,000 million dollar grant award to design, construct, and operate a Native Plant Nursery through the America Recovery & Reinvestment Act



(ARRA). The project will create employment, while simultaneously providing plants to support restoration efforts

on the Fort Apache Reservation and surrounding lands that were devastated in the 2002 Rodeo Chediski Fire. The Nursery will also cultivate a reliable and consistent supply of native plants, for future use, that may otherwise be destroyed, as they are subject to fire disease, and/or other landscape threats in their natural growing environment.

The Nursery will be physically located at Canyon Day Farm in Whiteriver, AZ and its product-mix will consist of meeting two specialized market niches. The first will focus on conifer seedlings, specializing in Ponderosa Pine with the goal of providing a recurrent inventory for the Tribe's restoration efforts. The second product-mix will focus on meeting the Tribe's immediate and on-going watershed and

riparian needs, with a concentration on native riparian plants.

Future plans include the introduction of local medicinal and ornamental plants, as well as fruits and vegetables, with the goal of identifying and meeting long-term commercial industry demands.

The Nursery Management Team also plans to coordinate a local "Farmers Market," to assist local area farmers and growing with an avenue to sell their home grown fruits, vegetables, spices, etc. More information on the Farmers Market will be included in future newsletters and community announcements as the plans evolve.

## WMAT TFFA PROJECT

The WMAT TFFA project evolved from the "Tribal Protection Forest Protection Act of 2004" legislation which means that government entities, such as the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, can enter into contracts with Tribes to work on forestry related projects located on government land adjacent to, and/or surrounding, Indian reservations, to protect Tribal lands from potential risks and/or dangers, such as hazardous fuels build up, wild land fires, etc.

As a result of the TFFA legislation; the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest entered into a \$767,893.00 forest fuels reduction project agreement with the WMAT.

The "Los Burros Project" is located on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forest lands, which are directly adjacent to

the Fort Apache Indian Reservation. The project will be accomplished in three phases, whereby Phase I requires the WMAT TFFA Crew to complete the preparation work for treatment on forest lands. In Phase II, the Forest Service will hire an outside fuels reduction contracting crew to complete the mechanized work for the project. Once Phase II is complete, the WMAT TFFA Team is responsible for competing Phase III, which is the thinning trees from acres defined by the data collected in Phases I and II.

According to Daniel Kessay, WMAT's ARRA Field Operations Manger, "The TFFA Project is a 'win-win' situation and we are grateful to participate in a precedent setting initiative."

## THE HAZARDOUS FUELS / RESTORATION PROJECT

On October 26, 2009, the WMAT received \$4,487,000 for its Hazard Fuels / Restoration Project; the largest of the ARRA Projects.



The two primary objectives of the Haz/Fuels Project are to: (1) protect and restore tribal lands; and (2) increase WMAT employment. Furthermore, this project will restore and protect WMAT's tribal communities that are still suffering from the devastating effects of the 2003 Rodeo-Chediski Fire. This project will also protect and improve the conditions of the watersheds around the many springs and lakes on the reservation.

The Haz/Fuels Project Work Plan focuses on six (6) project areas:

(1) Culvert Armoring and Maintenance; (2) Hand Seeding; (3) Log Erosion Barriers; (4) Bank and Channel Stabilization; (5) Cultural Site Protection; (6) Fence Enclosures; Deterioration of Farmland; and Hazardous Fuels Reduction Work.

The short-term objectives of this project is to protect the WMAT's communities from future wildfires, while creating training and job opportunities for tribal members.. The long-term objectives are to maintain the hazard fuels reduction treatments and restore tribal lands previously affected by floods.

### WMAT ARRA Project Mission Statement

To contribute to the White Mountain Apache Tribe's (WMAT) economic infrastructure by building self-sustaining and self-sufficient forest based commercial enterprises that also support the environmental, natural, educational, and cultural resources of the Tribe.