



## The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)

*The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) (Public Law 111-5) was signed into law by President Obama within a month of his first taking office in 2009. Through it, the National Park Service was able to invest approximately \$750 million in 800 projects across the country.*

Often referred to as The Stimulus or The Recovery Act, ARRA provided funds for projects that were selected through a rigorous process and met specific criteria: address the highest priority mission needs; create the largest number of jobs in the shortest period of time; and create lasting value for the American people. The short timeframe for project completion was a critical factor in the choice of projects.



The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) logo

“A key to the efficient use of the ARRA funds made available for NPS transportation projects was the fact that we had a number of potential projects that were “shovel-ready,” said Mark Hartsoe, NPS Transportation Branch Chief. “In addition, we had our PTATS tracking system already in place, so we were able to quickly select and award projects and get them underway.”

The implementation of the ARRA funds made use of staff and talents across the NPS. “I was involved in the technology side; I managed the Project Management Information System (PMIS), which is a project funding system, a project formulation system,” said Helen Price, who recently retired from the NPS. “My involvement was to get a list of projects into the system right away, and figure out what the reporting requirements were going to be.”



One of the five alternative-fuel buses at Grand Canyon purchased with ARRA funds

Helen worked with a team that included coordinators in each region who met on a regular basis to identify specific projects and make sure that they were tracking obligation rates. “We used existing data systems, but set up a “dashboard” that had information that was pulled from those systems,” said Helen. “That dashboard, which dealt just with the ARRA projects, was placed on Inside NPS. It had the financial data associated with ARRA, along with the project reporting data that came from the tracking at DSC, the PTATS system, compliance data, data that was in PMIS, and several other sources.”

ARRA funds were used throughout the NPS for job-creating investments in critical infrastructure and facilities, trail restoration, the construction of energy efficient facilities, and renewable energy projects. Five types of NPS transportation projects were funded under ARRA:

- 1) Construction projects repaired, replaced, upgraded, and retrofitted infrastructure for health, safety, and energy efficiency. As an example, ARRA funds were used for the reconstruction of the Glasshouse parking area at Colonial National Historic Park in Virginia, to increase safety and enhance ADA compliance.

2) Deferred maintenance projects extended the useful life of facilities and reduced maintenance backlogs. At Cuyahoga National Park in Ohio, ARRA funds were used to perform preventative maintenance, such as replacing railroad ties.

3) Energy efficient equipment programs replaced aging vehicles with alternative fuel or hybrid buses. These vehicle replacements reduce fuel costs and the NPS carbon footprint on a continuing basis. Example: Cape Cod National Seashore used ARRA funds to purchase two alternative fuel trams with trailers.

4) Trails projects restored popular walking and hiking routes for safer use and extended useful lives. National park trails, especially those in the “front country,” are important assets for enhancing the visitor experience. Another example: ARRA funds were used for a number of projects along the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, including a rockfall hazard mitigation project in Pennsylvania.



Reconstruction of the Catoctin Aqueduct on the C&O Canal was funded through ARRA

5) Road maintenance projects used ARRA funds to preserve park roads and parkways, and rehabilitate deteriorated road networks. Preservation treatments were undertaken at a number of NPS sites, including Joshua Tree National Park in California.

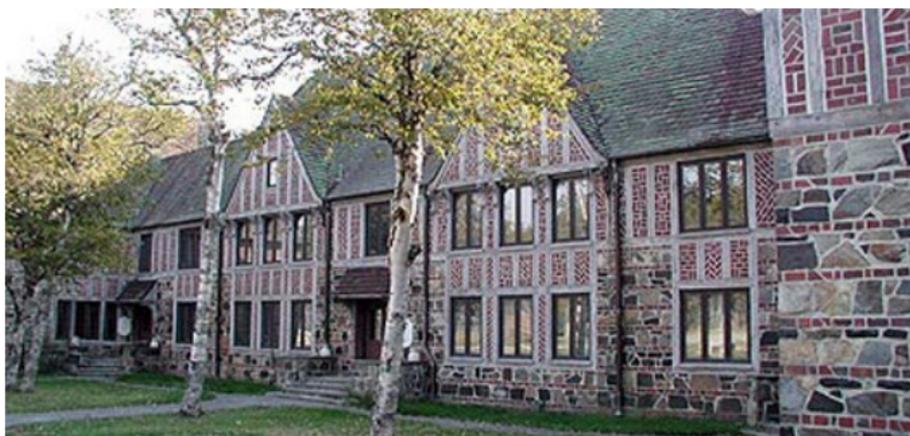
An important aspect of the ARRA program was the transparency in how the funds were being expended and what projects were being completed. The public was able to follow along with the selection and completion of National Park Service projects through an updated web listing. (Note: that DOI web site is no longer maintained.)

As a bonus, favorable pricing on large construction projects under ARRA resulted in savings of more than 20%, which translated to approximately \$129 million. The NPS used these cost savings to fund an additional 30 high-priority projects.

[Click here to view a listing of National Park Service projects funded under ARRA.](#) Click on the “full listing” link for a project list broken out by the contractor/recipient, amount, project description and park unit, and contract date. This listing tallies NPS projects totaling \$753,312,025.00.

“There was a pretty short time frame on getting the dollars spent; everyone was involved,” said Helen Price. “The department made it known that there would be a number of people auditing the program, so everyone knew that there would be great management scrutiny. There was also a lot of top-down management attention and support for the ARRA program.”

“It really took cooperation from a lot of different groups,” Price added. “The NPS can be very good at that, and ARRA was certainly an example of everybody pulling together to try to get something done as a priority.”



At Acadia National Park, a military building built for the Navy in 1935 was renovated as the Schoodic Education and Research Center (SERC) using ARRA funding.