

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act Colorado State Forest Service

High-Priority Forest Restoration and Fuels Mitigation Grant



M S Forest, LLC

Environment is our business.

Scott and Mary Canda, owners of M S Forest, LLC, in Aguilar, Colo., have provided forest management, tree thinning and reclamation services in southern Colorado for over 20 years. The company also has implemented many Natural Resource Conservation Service wildlife and grazing improvement projects on private land, and is a member of the Colorado Forest Products program.



M S Forest, LLC



A saleable product is key to offsetting the costs of cutting trees. As the economy fell, so did the value of the harvested trees. Over the past 2 years, like so many businesses in Las Animas County, M S Forest was forced to drastically reduce its workforce and cut the pay of remaining employees. When the Colorado State Forest Service released its ARRA Requests for Proposals, Scott and Mary were faced with the prospect of losing the business they worked so hard to build.

The location of the successful ARRA project proposal submitted by M S Forest, LLC, was once part of a Spanish land grant that encompassed the Purgatoire River watershed. Within the watershed lies North Lake, the main municipal water source for the city of Trinidad, Colo. The main purpose of the 750-acre project is to improve the fire resiliency of the land by reducing the amount of live fuel available to a fire. Work is in progress on Colorado Division of Wildlife property, and will expand to include private and municipal land.



"We are extremely grateful and appreciative," said Kassie Carley of M S Forest, LLC. "This ARRA funding will allow us to hire new crews and resume full compensation of our existing crew. As a result, our company will have the ability to do more forest restoration and fuels mitigation projects, and ultimately hire even more workers. The funding for this project will benefit not only our company and the people we hire, but also the local economy and most of all – the land". To date, the company has retained nine employees and hired three with ARRA funds.



Cory Miller is a sawyer for M S Forest, LLC. He previously worked for the company, but was part of the 2007 layoff. After losing his job, Cory found work as a farm/ranch hand in southern New Mexico. Near the end of 2009, he was released from his job. The timing could not have been better for M S Forest. They were happy to have the skilled sawyer back on the crew. Although Cory knows how to operate some of the equipment, he enjoys having a chain saw in his hand to trim limbs off the cut trees and cut tree trunks to specific lengths. He also has mechanical and welding skills. Cory currently lives in Trinidad.

Mike Mender is a commercial truck driver from Walsenburg, Colo. He also was part of the M S Forest crew until 2007. He was able to find work in Colorado with a Texas-based trucking firm. He, too, found himself unemployed again in 2009. M S Forest heard he was seeking employment and with ARRA funds, the company was able to hire him. Mike is married with adult children.



M S Forest, LLC

Robert "Auggie" Franklin is the skidder operator. This specialized piece of logging equipment is used to transport trees out of the forest to an opening where the logs are sorted and loaded on trailers. Auggie worked as a sawyer and equipment operator for M S Forest before the layoffs. After the layoffs, he moved to Raton, N.M., and worked on and off breaking horses for local ranchers. Fortunately, he was available to return to M S Forest, and the company was glad to have him back.