

[US Army Corps Of Engineers](#)

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PHOENIX - The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District yesterday announced the projects in Southern California and Arizona affected by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). Included in the act is \$645,000 for the Va Shly'ay Akimel Salt River Ecosystem Restoration project located along the Salt River primarily in the in the Salt River Pima, Maricopa Indian Community (SRPMIC) and bordering with the City of Mesa.

The Act, referred to as the "stimulus package," appropriates nearly \$184 million for the district to continue studies, complete construction work and conduct operations and maintenance for two dozen projects throughout the region. The ARRA, which President Barack Obama signed into law on Feb. 17, is intended to help in the recovery of the U.S. economy.

"We are very pleased to receive Recovery Act funds to continue these vital projects and help in the recovery of the nation's economy," said Col. Thomas H. Magness IV, commander of the Los Angeles District. "The funds provided in this act allow us to quickly put our fellow citizens to work and to move forward on a number of critical projects."

U.S. Representative Ed Pastor has been working for years to ensure the importance and funding for the Va Shly'ay project has remained a priority in Congress. He is glad ARRA funds have been secured for this project and others in Arizona.

"I'm pleased that these stimulus funds will be used to invest in Arizona's infrastructure and workforce," said Pastor. "I'm thankful these projects will continue to move forward."

The Va Shly'ay Akimel project will restore the riparian ecosystem to the degree that it supports native vegetation and wildlife, establishing a functional floodplain that mimics the natural processes, and providing passive recreation opportunities. The plan includes the following measures:

- Reshaping of abandoned quarry pits and the river channel to provide a low-flow channel and terraces
- Construction of new water conveyance channels, irrigation diversions, pipelines, spillways and/or groundwater wells to bring surface water and/or ground water to the river to nourish vegetation planted along the river
- Construction of a grade control structure across the channel at the abandoned Gilbert Road quarry
- Passive recreation consisting of approximately 5.1 miles of multi-use decomposed granite trails, parking lots with trailheads, rest stops and interpretive signs

Congressman Harry Mitchell said the project is vital to the area's environmental and economic future

"Water projects like this one are absolutely critical to Arizona," Mitchell said. "With such a limited water supply, our state's economy depends on our ability to reliably and efficiently control and protect our precious resources. Not only will this project provide long term environmental and economic gains, but it will create jobs in Arizona now."

City of Mesa Mayor Scott Smith said he is excited about the prospects the project represents for the city, the SRPMIC and the surrounding community.

"Getting recovery money from ARRA is great news for the partnership between the City of Mesa and the Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community for this project," Smith said. "The Va Shly'ay Akimel Restoration along the Salt River will support native wildlife and vegetation and return this area to a more natural condition."

The project would add approximately 1,487 acres of habitat, including 883 acres of cottonwood/willow trees, 380 acres of mesquite bosque, 200 acres of wetlands, and 24 acres of Sonoran desert scrub shrub, thus restoring functioning riparian areas to the currently dry river bed. In Arizona, more than 90 percent of riparian areas have been lost due to impacts from modern settlement and urbanization.

"Continuing the work on Va Shly'ay project is critical to the area in order to provide both a viable environmental restoration corridor and a way for water to move more efficiently in this region,"

Magness said. "The funds provided in this act allow us to do that and to work with our sponsor and contractors to provide much-needed jobs in today's economy."

The funds will be used to complete the architect-engineer design contract for final design, construction drawings and specifications for the first phase of the project. Economists estimate the work will create nearly two dozen jobs directly related to the work and additional work in industries supplying or supporting the construction, performing operations and maintenance activities, and selling goods and services to the workers and their families.

"The Corps is fully committed to ensuring the Recovery Act funds provided for Civil Works are used to achieve the purposes envisioned by the President and Congress for the legislation," said Maj. Gen. Merdith "Bo" Temple, deputy commanding general for Civil and Emergency Operations for the Corps.

For additional information about the Corps' nation-wide projects funded by the Recovery Act, visit <http://www.usace.army.mil/recovery> . For information on the ARRA, visit <http://www.recovery.gov/>