

BLM Wyo office gets nearly \$23 million

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Thursday, May 7, 2009 9:59 PM MDT

CHEYENNE -- The Bureau of Land Management's Wyoming office will receive about \$23 million in federal stimulus money for projects that include improving facilities, roads and sage grouse habitat on BLM administered land in the state.

The money for Wyoming is part of more than \$300 million in federal stimulus money the BLM is planning to use for some 650 projects nationwide.

"A lot of it is going toward our deferred maintenance, which is graveling roads, fixing bridges, fixing grades on poorly drained roads," BLM spokeswoman Cindy Wertz said. "So I think that's going to be beneficial."

Road and bridge work will account for the largest share of the money -- \$10.2 million.

Wildlife habitat restoration, including sage grouse habitat, will receive \$2.8 million. Money also will be spent to assess sage grouse habitat.

Environmental groups have been critical of BLM leasing land containing sage grouse habitat for oil and gas development. Environmental groups have been pressing the federal government to protect the bird.

Other projects receiving stimulus money in Wyoming include installing solar panels and a wind turbine to reduce energy costs at BLM facilities throughout the state.

Altogether 46 projects will be funded.

"A lot of these projects are ones that have been on our books but haven't been funded in the past for whatever reason, and the stimulus money gave us an opportunity to get some funds for some of these projects," Wertz said.

The BLM manages about 18 million acres of public lands and resources in Wyoming.