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NEWS RELEASE

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USDA to provide up to \$30,000 and technical assistance for stabilization of Rockport, Mass. dam

AMHERST, Mass. -- The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has approved up to \$30,000 in federal funds for work to stabilize the Millbrook Dam in Rockport, Mass. The funds are being provided to the Town of Rockport through the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program administered by NRCS. The agency is also providing technical assistance for the work.

Charles H. Clark, Chair of the Rockport Board of Selectmen, requested the federal assistance last week after the dam was damaged by recent heavy rains between May 12 and May 15, 2006. Located within Millbrook Park on Beach Street, the dam had partially collapsed, causing extensive damage to the park and endangering public safety, as well as business and residential property downstream. The possible rupture of water and sewer lines also threatened to release contaminants into Rockport Harbor.

NRCS will cover 75 percent of the cost of temporarily repairing the collapsed portion of the dam and stabilizing the remaining section, up to \$30,000. The funding was approved in Washington, DC by NRCS Chief Bruce Knight.

“NRCS engineers were on-site shortly after the request for assistance was received last Tuesday to help assess the condition of the dam and provide technical assistance in the repair work,” said Cecil B. Currin, State Conservationist for NRCS in Massachusetts. “Our staff has worked closely with the state Department of Conservation and Recreation’s Office of Dam Safety on this, as well.”

Through the EWP program, NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to reduce the threat to life and property from excessive erosion and flooding caused by the sudden impairment of a watershed from a natural disaster. Nationwide, EWP funds address public safety and restoration efforts on private and public lands and are used to remove debris, restore eroded streambanks, re-seed burned areas and take steps to mitigate threats to people and property from impaired watersheds.

NRCS is a federal agency that works hand-in-hand with Massachusetts conservation districts and other partners to improve and protect the commonwealth’s soil, water and other natural resources. Since 1935, private landowners and communities have voluntarily worked with NRCS specialists to prevent erosion, improve water quality and promote sustainable agriculture. For more information on NRCS in Massachusetts, visit www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov.

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