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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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USDA to help protect Western Mass. rivers and streams damaged by Tropical Storm Irene

AMHERST, Mass. (Nov. 10, 2011) -- The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has approved nearly \$2.8 million in federal funds to help Western Massachusetts towns recover from damage caused by Tropical Storm Irene along rivers and streams. The agency will provide help for emergency protection work for town roads, sewer lines, and buildings at 35 sites in 14 towns in Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden and Hampshire counties.

The funds are being provided through the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program, administered by NRCS, which offers financial and technical 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, in this case high river flows from the extreme rainfall of Tropical Storm Irene.

Town officials requested the federal assistance, citing concern that erosion caused by flooding is threatening public safety and nearby homes and businesses, and has caused road closures. All EWP projects must be sponsored by a political subdivision of the state; such as a city, county, tribe or conservation district. The sponsor secures land rights and permits and funds 25 percent of the project cost, either in cash or in-kind contributions.

"Tropical Storm Irene caused significant flooding in Western Massachusetts, resulting in river and stream bank erosion," said Christine S. Clarke, NRCS State Conservationist for Massachusetts. "With NRCS help, the repair work will safeguard lives and property from flooding hazards in the next significant storm."

NRCS will cover 75 percent of the cost of construction, which involves stabilizing river and stream banks and repairing roads. The work is underway at some sites and will begin soon at other locations. The work is expected to take about 10 to 60 days.

Staff from the NRCS offices in Greenfield, Hadley and Pittsfield met with each of the communities affected by Tropical Storm Irene to offer assistance through EWP and will continue to work with communities that request help. Additional sites are currently being evaluated for possible assistance.

Nationwide, EWP funds address public safety and restoration efforts on private and public lands and are used to remove debris, restore eroded stream banks, re-seed burned areas and take steps to mitigate threats to people and property from impaired watersheds.

(MORE)

Following are the estimated cost, federal funding and local share for each county and town:

COUNTY	CITY/TOWN	NO. OF SITES	EST. COST	FEDERAL \$ (75%)	LOCAL \$ (25%)
Berkshire	Adams	3	\$994,380.00	\$745,785.00	\$248,595.00
	GreatBarrington	1	\$3,300.00	\$2,475.00	\$825.00
	Monterey	1	\$50,000.00	\$37,500.00	\$12,500.00
	NorthAdams	1	\$3,300.00	\$2,475.00	\$825.00
	Williamstown	1	\$245,000.00	\$183,750.00	\$61,250.00
	5	7	\$1,295,980.00	\$971,985.00	\$323,995.00
Franklin	Buckland	9	\$1,155,300.00	\$866,475.00	\$288,825.00
	Colrain	7	\$524,800.00	\$393,600.00	\$131,200.00
	Conway	1	\$150,000.00	\$112,500.00	\$37,500.00
	Hawley	3	\$176,100.00	\$132,075.00	\$44,025.00
	Shelburne	1	\$44,000.00	\$33,000.00	\$11,000.00
	5	21	\$2,050,200.00	\$1,537,650.00	\$512,550.00
Hampshire	Cummington	1	\$160,000.00	\$120,000.00	\$40,000.00
	Worthington	1	\$41,250.00	\$30,937.50	\$10,312.50
	2	2	\$201,250.00	\$150,937.50	\$50,312.50
Hampden	Chester	4	\$111,000.00	\$83,250.00	\$27,750.00
	Westfield	1	\$100,000.00	\$75,000.00	\$25,000.00
	2	5	\$211,000.00	\$158,250.00	\$52,750.00
TOTAL	14	35	\$3,733,030.00	\$2,799,772.50	\$939,607.50

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. For more information, visit www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov.

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