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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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USDA to provide up to \$200,000 and technical assistance for stabilization of Taunton, Mass. dam

AMHERST, Mass. -- The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has approved up to \$200,000 in federal funds to be available for stabilization of the Whittenton Pond Dam in Taunton, Mass. The funds are being provided to the City of Taunton through the Emergency Watershed Program (EWP) administered by NRCS. The agency will also provide technical assistance for the work, which is expected to begin as early as tonight.

Taunton Mayor Robert G. Nunes requested the federal assistance on Tuesday due to concern that the dam would fail under the pressure of increased water levels caused by the recent extended period of heavy rains, threatening public safety and property downstream. The funding was approved today in Washington, DC by NRCS Chief Bruce Knight.

The EWP funding will assist with a controlled draw-down of the pond in order to do a visual assessment of the dam's condition and to determine if additional work is necessary. NRCS will cover 75 percent of the cost of the work up to \$200,000.

Massachusetts NRCS engineers have been on-site to help assess the condition of the dam and will provide technical assistance in the stabilization work.

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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