



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Soil mapping ongoing in Franklin County

AMHERST, Mass. (April 14, 2010) – Soil scientists from the United States Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) are fanning out across several western Franklin County towns to complete field work for mapping and classifying the county’s soils as part of the National Cooperative Soil Survey.

The purpose of the soil survey is to provide information needed for wise land use planning and natural resource management.

The field work, which will occur in Ashfield, the western part of Buckland, the southern part of Charlemont, the western part of Conway and Hawley, entails walking across representative portions of landforms and digging – then filling – small observation holes using hand tools. Soil samples are generally not removed; rather, the soils are identified based on physical properties. A few areas throughout other western Franklin County towns may also be investigated to collect data for previously mapped areas.

“A relatively small proportion of property tracts will be traversed,” said Al Averill, NRCS Assistant State Soil Scientist for Massachusetts. “We wanted to inform the public about the mapping because some landowners may have questions or concerns if they see the soil scientists at work or are asked for access to their land.”

The mapping began this week and will continue through September. It is expected that about 250 acres will be mapped daily. NRCS scientists will be working alone most of the time; driving to assigned areas in U.S. government vehicles and covering ground on foot. All will carry identification.

Franklin County residents who have questions about the soil mapping project may contact Al Averill at 413-253-4382 or al.averill@ma.usda.gov.

The National Cooperative Soil Survey Program (NCSS) is a partnership, led by NRCS, that includes federal land management agencies, state agricultural experiment stations and state and local units of government that provides soil survey information necessary for understanding, managing, conserving and sustaining the nation’s limited soil resources.

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