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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PUBLIC COMMENT SOUGHT ON DRAFT PLAN TO UPGRADE THE HOP BROOK DAM IN NORTHBOROUGH

AMHERST, Mass. (July 22, 2009) – The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is seeking public comment on a draft plan and environmental assessment for upgrading of the Hop Brook Dam in Northborough. Although the dam is still structurally sound, bringing it up to current performance and safety standards will maintain flood control benefits.

The draft plan calls for widening and strengthening the Hop Brook Dam's auxiliary spillway to prevent overtopping of the dam and breach failure. Massachusetts will receive \$2.4 million in Recovery Act funds for construction work to upgrade the dam.

The ***Draft Supplemental Watershed Plan No. 6 & Environmental Assessment for Rehabilitation of Hop Brook Floodwater Retarding Dam*** is available on the NRCS Massachusetts website: www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov. Please submit written comments on or before August 31, 2009 to Christine Clarke, State Conservationist, USDA-NRCS, 451 West Street, Amherst, MA 01002-2953 or Christine.Clarke@ma.usda.gov.

The Hop Brook Dam is part of a system of nine dams in the 377 square mile Sudbury-Assabet-Concord (SuAsCo) rivers watershed that provide an estimated \$1.7 million in annual flood damage reduction benefits.

This project will help to safeguard lives and protect residences, businesses, roads, schools, a fire department and utilities within the floodplain in this continually growing area west of Boston. The SuAsCo watershed area has experienced significant urban development since 1962 when NRCS and the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) began building the dam system.

DCR owns, operates and maintains the dams, and monitors to ensure that the dams provide flood protection to the expanding population of this region. As the state sponsor, DCR will provide 35 percent of the funding for the project. NRCS will provide technical and financial assistance through its Watershed Rehabilitation Program, a national program that repairs and updates watershed dams across the country.

In addition to providing flood protection, the natural areas surrounding the Hop Brook Dam and the other SuAsCo dams provide recreational benefits to residents and essential habitat for wildlife.

Massachusetts is one of 11 states nationwide receiving a share of \$45 million through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to rehabilitate aging flood control structures. The George H. Nichols dam in Westborough will also be upgraded with \$2.1 million in Recovery Act funding.

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