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# NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **USDA initiative offers assistance with forest land planning**

### **Applications for the New England-New York Forestry Initiative will be accepted through January 31, 2011 for current funding**

AMHERST, Mass. (Nov. 8, 2010) – USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Chief Dave White has announced that \$700,000 in federal funding is available to assist Massachusetts forest land owners with forest land planning and management under the New England-New York Forestry Initiative.

Massachusetts is one of seven states participating in this special initiative; a total of \$5.9 million will be available to forest land owners throughout New England and New York.

“The main goal of this effort is to promote exemplary stewardship among private landowners by assisting them to improve forest health and productivity, wildlife habitat and water quality,” White said. “Besides providing economic benefits, forests are home to diverse communities of fish and wildlife. Through sound planning and management, our goal is to help private landowners keep forests as forests.”

Forest land owners who would like assistance are encouraged to call or visit their local USDA Service Center by January 31, 2011 to submit an application and complete the necessary paperwork to establish their eligibility. USDA Service Centers are listed online at [offices.usda.gov](http://offices.usda.gov), or in the telephone book under United States Government, Agriculture Department. More information is available on the Massachusetts NRCS website at [www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov).

The forestry initiative will assist private landowners in conservation planning and management of their private forests to improve wildlife habitat, forest health and productivity, and water quality. Eligible conservation practices include forest stand improvement, tree and shrub establishment, upland wildlife habitat management, stream crossings, riparian forest buffer, fish passage, forest trails and landings, access roads, wetland restoration, tree and shrub site preparation, brush management, herbaceous weed control, access control, restoration and management of declining habitats, and tree/shrub pruning.

Last year, the New England Governors’ Conference, the North East State Foresters Association, USDA’s Forest Service and NRCS joined forces to develop a plan, known as the New England-New York Keeping Forests as Forests report, to protect and ensure the sustainability of the region’s forest land-base. Forests not only provide clean water and wildlife habitat, but are also the backbone of the region’s rural economies, offering a sustainable source of renewable energy, forest products, outdoor-related recreational opportunities and tourism.

NRCS is celebrating its 75<sup>th</sup> year of helping people conserve, maintain, and improve our natural resources and environment. NRCS works with local conservation districts and other partners to serve farmers and landowners throughout the state.

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