



Massachusetts State Office

451 West Street, Amherst, MA 01002
413-253-4350, fax 413-253-4375
www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Diane Baedeker Petit
Public Affairs Officer
413-253-4371
diane.petit@ma.usda.gov

PUBLIC MEETING SLATED FOR PROPOSED UPGRADE OF GEORGE H. NICHOLS DAM, WESTBOROUGH

AMHERST, Mass. (February 4, 2009) – Westborough residents and other interested parties are invited to a public meeting on Thursday, February 19, 2009, 7:00 pm to 9:00 pm, in the Forbes Municipal Building, Room 23, 45 West Main Street, Westborough, to discuss a proposed project to upgrade the George H. Nichols Dam on the Assabet River. The dam forms the Westborough Reservoir off Mill Road in Westborough.

Staff from the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will present information about the proposed project and the public will have an opportunity to ask questions and comment at the meeting.

DCR, which owns, operates and maintains the dam, has requested federal funding through the NRCS Watershed Rehabilitation Program to upgrade the dam to accommodate runoff from land use changes since the dam was built in 1970.

Significant upstream urban development in the Sudbury-Assabet-Concord (SuAsCo) rivers watershed has generated the need to upgrade six of the 10 dams built between 1962 and 1987 by NRCS and DCR. Since their construction, DCR and NRCS have checked the dams annually and after significant storms.

Although the dams are still structurally sound and do not pose an imminent threat to public safety, the increased land development generates higher amounts of runoff than the dams were originally designed to handle. Upgrading the dams will not only provide better flood protection, but will also maintain wetland and wildlife habitat and outdoor recreation such as nature and hiking trails.

The 20 foot high George H. Nichols Dam currently can store nearly 530 million gallons of water, protecting homes, businesses and bridges within a seven square mile area by preventing flood damage.

###