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# NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Officials dig the “Final Acre” of the Plymouth County Soil Survey

*Soil data now on-line*

EAST WAREHAM, Mass. (Nov. 5, 2010) – Federal, state and local officials celebrated the completion of the Plymouth County Soil Survey Update with a Final Acre Ceremony today. The event, held at the UMass Cranberry Station in East Wareham, Mass., included a speaking program, ceremonial digging of the final hole, recognition of soil scientists who worked on the survey, informational displays and refreshments.

The event was hosted by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the Plymouth County Conservation District and the Pilgrim Resource Conservation and Development Council.

Speakers included Christine Clarke, State Conservationist, NRCS Massachusetts, Dick Ward, Plymouth County Conservation District, David Hvizdak, State Soil Scientist, NRCS Massachusetts and Bill Napolitano, Environmental Planner, SRPEDD. Peter Fletcher, NRCS Soil Scientist (retired), served as Master of Ceremonies and Robert Tunstead, NRCS Soil Scientist, dug the ceremonial final hole.

Federal, state and local officials joined users of the updated soil survey, including engineers, private consultants, and regional planners, in the celebration.

The soil survey provides soil maps that identify soil types in the area, along with information on the characteristics of those soil types. Soil surveys are often used by farmers, real estate agents, land use planners, engineers, town boards of health, conservation commissions, soil boards and many others who need information about this valuable natural resource.

The Plymouth County Soil Survey can be accessed in several ways depending upon user needs. Homeowners, farmers and other general users can access the data through the Web Soil Survey (<http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/>), a web-based system where users can tailor soil survey mapping and interpretations for their particular “area of interest.”

Land use professionals, government agencies and others who use GIS software can download soils data through the Soil Data Mart (<http://soildatamart.nrcs.usda.gov/>). The shapefile can then be used in conjunction with a database to tailor custom soil resource planning products.

“I am very pleased to announce the completion of the Plymouth County Soil Survey Update,” said Christine Clarke, NRCS State Conservationist for Massachusetts. “The previous Plymouth County publication was released in July 1969 and was based on field work performed from 1950 through 1963. NRCS soil scientists have worked hard to remap this area in order to provide much more detailed soils information in the update.”

“The Plymouth County Conservation District is enthusiastic about the release of the long awaited update of Plymouth County soil survey,” said Gary Randall, Plymouth County Conservation District chairman. “Although updated soils information has been available by site upon request, the soil survey update now provides planning tool that has been missing for an extended period of time.”

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Randall explained that the updated survey includes soil mapping with a minimum size delineation of a half acre. "The accuracy is greatly improved and the soils descriptions reflect the advancement of soil science and technology. It is currently the most advanced soil survey in the state today," said Randall.

A soil survey is the systematic examination, description, classification, and mapping of soils in an area. Soil surveys are classified according to the kind and intensity of field examination. The National Cooperative Soil Survey program develops and implements standards for describing, classifying, mapping, writing, and publishing information about soils of a specific area.

A soil survey commonly has maps with soil boundaries over an aerial photograph base. A soil survey also contains soil descriptions and tables of soil properties and features. NRCS soil scientists examine soils within these defined land areas and observe landscapes and landforms in order to group soils by similar characteristics, including soil color, soil texture, pH, and permeability.

The Plymouth County Soil Survey Update consists of 458,567 acres and 231 mapping units (groupings of similar soils) performed at a map scale of 1:12,000.

The National Cooperative Soil Survey (NCSS) is a nationwide partnership of federal, regional, state and local agencies; and private entities and institutions that works together to cooperatively investigate, inventory, document, classify, interpret, disseminate, and publish information about soils of the United States and its trust territories and commonwealths. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is responsible for leadership and coordination of NCSS activities, and for the extension of soil survey technology to global applications.

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