

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Federal easement program to help Massachusetts recover from Hurricane Sandy and prevent damage from future flooding

Landowners in Barnstable, Bristol, Dukes, Nantucket and Plymouth counties must apply by Sept. 2, 2013

AMHERST, Mass. (July 12, 2013) – USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is providing up to \$124.8 million in Emergency Watershed Protection Program-Floodplain Easement (EWP-FPE) funding to help prevent damage from significant storm events in Massachusetts and other states affected by Hurricane Sandy.

Floodplains store water, helping to protect lands downstream from future flood damage. When the health and integrity of the lands deteriorate, so do the environmental, economic and social benefits they provide.

Through EWP-FPE, NRCS purchases permanent easements on eligible lands and restores the area to natural conditions. A healthy floodplain enhances fish and wildlife habitat, water quality, flood water retention and ground water recharge.

The program complements traditional disaster recovery funding and allows NRCS to purchase a permanent easement on lands within floodplains that sustained damage from Sandy.

NRCS will accept applications for EWP-FPE through **Sept. 2, 2013**.

Funds are only available in counties affected by Hurricane Sandy and where a major disaster was declared pursuant to the [Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act](#) in Connecticut, Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Virginia and West Virginia.

In Massachusetts, Barnstable, Bristol, Dukes, Nantucket and Plymouth counties are eligible.

Private lands, and those owned by local and state governments, are eligible if they are located in a floodplain but not subject to tidal influence, storm surge or storm wave action; and were damaged by flooding during Hurricane Sandy. Land must also meet one of the following criteria:

1. Would contribute to the restoration of flood storage and flow, provide for control of erosion, or improve the practical management of the floodplain easement; or
2. Could be inundated or adversely impacted as a result of a dam breach.

Interested landowners should contact their local NRCS field office to learn more about the program and submit an application prior to the Sept. 2 deadline. Offices serving the affected areas are:

- **Barnstable NRCS field office** (serves Barnstable, Dukes and Nantucket counties), 270 Communications Way, Hyannis, MA 02601, 508-771-6476.
- **West Wareham NRCS field office** (serves Bristol, Norfolk and Plymouth counties), 15 Cranberry Highway, West Wareham, MA 02576, 508-295-5151 ext. 2

“Restoring these ecosystems ensures our lands are resilient to future threats and impacts,” NRCS State Conservationist Christine Clarke said.

Easement compensation rates and ranking priorities vary by location and depend on where the land is located within the floodplain and whether it’s agricultural or vacant land or land with homes or other structures.

The program easements are permanent in term. Lands with structures, such as homes, are eligible for enrollment as well as open or agricultural lands. If a structure is present, NRCS will cost-share the removal or demolition of that structure and enroll the remaining lot in a permanent easement.

More information is also available on the NRCS floodplain easement [website](#).

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USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service helps America’s farmers, ranchers and forestland owners conserve the Nation’s soil, water, air and other natural resources. All programs are voluntary and offer science-based solutions that benefit both the landowner and the environment.