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NEWS RELEASE

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USDA Provides Funding to Remove Briggsville Dam

Project will improve wildlife habitat and save jobs

AMHERST, Mass. October 7, 2010 – U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment Harris Sherman today announced Federal assistance to remove the Briggsville Dam in the town of Clarksburg, Massachusetts. The 15 foot high and 200 foot long dam will be removed to improve cold water habitat for native fish species and save jobs by eliminating the need for costly repairs.

“This project exemplifies local, State and Federal entities and individuals working together to improve wildlife habitat, enhance communities and stimulate local economies,” said Sherman. “Projects like this throughout the country are making a huge impact in the lives of our citizens as well as the quality of our environment.”

USDA funding for the Briggsville Dam removal project is made available through the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program, a voluntary program administered by the USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service for conservation-minded landowners who want to develop and improve wildlife habitat.

A diverse group of public/private partners are working together to remove the Briggsville Dam and restore the North Branch of the Hoosic River. In addition to NRCS and Cascade, project partners include American Rivers, the Town of Clarksburg, the Massachusetts Division of Ecological Restoration, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture, the Wildlife Conservation Society, Trout Unlimited and the Hoosic River Watershed Association. USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is providing more than \$350,000 in financial assistance for the project. Other conservation partners in conservation will provide an additional \$200,000 bringing total funding for the dam removal project to nearly \$550,000.

The project involves removing the dam, stabilizing and vegetating banks, protecting an upstream bridge, and restoring native stream and riparian habitat in the North Branch of the Hoosic River. The restoration, which will start mid-October and is expected to be completed by mid-December, will improve over 30 miles of high quality headwater streams and exemplary trout habitat, and will benefit native river species, including Eastern brook trout, slimy sculpin, longnose sucker and other native fish species. The longnose sucker is a state-listed species of concern.

(MORE)

The dam is owned by Cascade School Supplies, which purchased the building – and the dam with it – about five years ago. Shortly thereafter, the Massachusetts Office of Dam Safety mandated the inspection of every dam in the state and the Briggsville Dam was classified as needing significant repairs.

Removing the dam will help Cascade School Supplies retain jobs. The company faced the prospect of abandoning the facility, laying off employees, and leaving the community without one of its largest employers if they had to fund dam repairs or removal. Cascade School Supplies has been in business for 78 years and seasonally employs over 150 people in Northern Berkshire County.

NRCS is celebrating 75 years helping people help the land in 2010. Since 1935, the NRCS conservation delivery system has advanced a unique partnership with state and local governments and private landowners delivering conservation based on specific, local conservation needs, while accommodating state and national interests. President Franklin Roosevelt created the agency on this day in 1935 to help farmers and ranchers overcome the devastating effects of drought, especially in the Midwest and Northern Plains regions.

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