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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NRCS funding available for wetland protection and habitat improvement projects in Massachusetts

Proposals Due February 10th

AMHERST, Mass. (January 24, 2012) — The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has announced a funding opportunity for wetland protection, restoration and enhancement activities on eligible lands in Massachusetts. Proposals for projects are due by **February 10, 2012**. Funding comes through the agency's Wetlands Reserve Enhancement Program (WREP), with up to \$17 million available nationwide.

"This is a great opportunity for Massachusetts stakeholders to carry out high-priority wetland protection and improve wildlife habitat," Christine Clarke, NRCS Massachusetts State Conservationist said. "WREP is an important conservation tool and I encourage everyone who is interested in applying to send us their proposals as soon as possible."

WREP is a voluntary conservation program that works through partnership agreements with states, nongovernmental organizations and tribes, as defined in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. WREP is a component of the Wetlands Reserve Program through which NRCS enters into agreements with eligible partners to leverage resources to carry out high-priority wetland protection and improve wildlife habitat.

Benefits to partners in WREP agreements include:

- Wetland Restoration in high-priority areas;
- The ability to cost-share restoration or enhancement components beyond those required by NRCS;
- Participating in management or monitoring of selected project locations; and
- Opportunities to use innovative restoration methods and practices.

Eligible partners may submit general WREP proposals for individual, watershed-wide or larger geographical area projects. WREP partners are required to contribute a financial or technical assistance fund match.

State NRCS staffs will use a competitive process to evaluate the proposals. Recommended proposals will then be competed nationally for final selection and funding.

For more information about WREP and details on how to submit a proposal, visit www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov or contact Ruthie Davis, Program Specialist, at 413-253-4356 or ruthie.davis@ma.usda.gov.

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