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# NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## USDA to help remove tornado debris from Springfield and Monson rivers and streams

AMHERST, Mass. (July 14, 2011) -- The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has approved up to \$657,000 in federal funds for removal of trees and other debris deposited by the June 1<sup>st</sup> tornados in rivers and streams in Springfield and Monson.

The funds are being provided to the City of Springfield and Town of Monson through the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program, administered by NRCS. The agency is also providing technical assistance for the work, which will be done at two sites in Springfield and three sites in Monson. Other sites in Springfield, Monson and other affected towns are currently being evaluated for possible assistance.

Springfield City Engineer Christopher Cignoli and Monson Select Board Chair Dr. Richard Smith requested the federal assistance, citing concern that uprooted trees and other debris caused by the tornado could block culverts during heavy rain resulting in flooded streets and threatening public safety and nearby homes and businesses.

"The June 1<sup>st</sup> tornados deposited a significant amount of debris in local rivers and streams," said Christine S. Clarke, NRCS State Conservationist for Massachusetts. "With NRCS help, the debris removal will safeguard lives and property from the real hazard of flooding in the next significant storm."

NRCS will cover 75 percent of the cost of debris removal, which involves cutting up downed tree limbs and using heavy equipment to lift the debris from the water bodies. The work is underway at some sites and will begin soon at other locations. Each site is expected to take about five days.

Following are the debris removal sites and the estimated cost, federal funding and local share for each:

SITE	CITY/TOWN	EST. COST	FEDERAL \$	LOCAL \$
Johnny Appleseed Park	Springfield	\$80,000	\$60,000	\$20,000
Rifle Street	Springfield	\$200,000	\$150,000	\$50,000
Chicopee Brook	Monson	\$342,000	\$256,500	\$85,500
Ely Brook	Monson	\$160,000	\$120,000	\$40,000
Chicopee Brook	Monson	\$94,000	\$70,500	\$23,500
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$876,000</b>	<b>\$657,000</b>	<b>\$219,000</b>

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“The support and guidance provided by the NRCS immediately after the disaster allowed the City to directly focus on the clean up and restoration of our City’s waterways and alleviate the short-term potential of stream flooding as well as focusing on the long-term need of stream bank stabilization caused by the debris,” said Springfield City Engineer Christopher Cignoli. “The NRCS staff’s commitment to each of our current projects, and on our projected future projects has allowed the in-field clean up to proceed very quickly, and return these areas to their pre-disaster condition.”

“NRCS has been very responsive. This was the only avenue available to us to get help clearing debris from rivers and streams,” said Monson Highway Surveyor John Morrell. “Two bridges, one on State Street and the other on Cushman Street, would be at risk without this assistance. We appreciate their help.”

“We met with each of the communities hit hardest by the tornado to offer assistance through EWP. The damage to each community was staggering,” said Vince Snyder, District Conservationist for the NRCS Hadley field office. “We will continue to work with the communities that request our help.”

Through the EWP program, NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to reduce the threat to life and property from excessive erosion and flooding caused by the sudden impairment of a watershed from a natural disaster. Nationwide, EWP funds address public safety and restoration efforts on private and public lands and are used to remove debris, restore eroded stream banks, re-seed burned areas and take steps to mitigate threats to people and property from impaired watersheds.

NRCS is a federal agency that works hand-in-hand with Massachusetts conservation districts and other partners to improve and protect the commonwealth’s soil, water and other natural resources. For more information, visit [www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov).

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