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USDA-NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE RECEIVES \$499,550 FOR APRIL 2011 TORNADO DAMAGE RECOVERY

ATHENS, GA, Feb. 10, 2012 --- USDA- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist, James E. Tillman, Sr., announced today the availability of funds to provide financial assistance to those who applied for tornado disaster relief in north Georgia through the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program.

“After the devastation of the April 27, 2011 tornado and all the cost associated with the clean up, emergency services and personnel expense of the tornado it was really overwhelming. The City really didn't know how we were going to be able to afford cleaning up the creeks. The need to do so was imperative to keep flooding to a minimum in the City. Then our friends from NRCS came forward and started working with the City to obtain funding and provided technical support. It has truly been a blessing to our community and now the much needed work can start all because of NRCS”, said Dan Wright, city manager of Ringgold.

NRCS administers the EWP, which provides technical and financial assistance to address public safety and restoration efforts on private, public and tribal lands. Through sponsorships, NRCS can pay landowners and communities up to 75 percent of the cost of removing debris caused by floods, fires, windstorms, and other natural occurrences. It is not necessary for a national emergency to be declared for an area to be eligible for assistance.

“By providing this funding to the local communities that were struck by the destructive tornados this past year in north Georgia, we ensure the removing of debris caused by these storms will not cause further damage to the natural resources of the local communities,” said Tillman.

Public and private landowners are eligible for assistance through the EWP program, but they must be represented by a project sponsor. Local sponsors include any legal subdivision of state or local government, including local officials of city, county or state governments, Indian tribes, soil conservation districts, U.S. Forest Service and watershed authorities. Sponsors must secure 25 percent of the costs in cash or approved in-kind contributions. However, in some cases, the EWP program can cover up to 90 percent of the construction costs for projects in limited resource areas.

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