



United States Department of Agriculture  
Natural Resources Conservation Service

**Massachusetts State Office**

451 West Street, Amherst, MA 01002  
413-253-4350, fax 413-253-4375  
[www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.ma.nrcs.usda.gov)

# NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Diane Baedeker Petit  
Public Affairs Officer  
413-253-4371

## **Federal, local and private partners protect 125 acres of Pembroke wetlands**

### **Conservation project will protect water supply and bolster cranberry business**

PEMBROKE, Mass. (June 16, 2008) – More than 125 acres of environmentally-sensitive Pembroke cranberry bogs and surrounding upland will be permanently protected and restored to natural wetlands thanks to a partnership between a private landowner, the Town of Pembroke and the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Through the federal Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), NRCS has contributed \$1.4 million for an easement – the largest WRP easement in Massachusetts – on land formerly owned by Matthew Rhodes, Owner/Manager of Edgewood Bogs LLC cranberry company; the agency will also develop a plan to restore the wetlands. The Town of Pembroke purchased the protected land, which is in a Zone II drinking water supply protection area, from Rhodes and will maintain it for water supply protection and wildlife habitat conservation.

In addition to the environmental benefits, the project will help Rhodes bolster the long-term viability of Edgewood's cranberry operations by allowing him to focus on improving other bogs that he owns in the area.

"I believe this is the best use for this land, which is in an area that is increasingly in need of protected land to support the community and the environment. Edgewood can now invest in technology and renovation to increase production on our other land in agricultural use. We see it as a win for everyone involved," said Rhodes.

"Protecting this resource is important to Pembroke as it adds to the Town's open space. It also provides our Water Department with a new well site on adjacent land," said Gene Fulmine, DPW Director for the Town of Pembroke. "The new well site, which is in the Taunton River Basin, has been approved by the state Department of Environmental Protection and will be very beneficial as a future water source. Our present wells are in the South Coastal Basin."

Through WRP, NRCS provides technical and financial support to help landowners with their restoration efforts. To be eligible for WRP, land must be restorable, suitable for wildlife benefits, and must have had an agricultural history.

-- MORE --

“WRP offers an opportunity for landowners to voluntarily protect, restore and enhance wetlands on their property,” said Christine S. Clarke, State Conservationist for NRCS in Massachusetts. “We greatly appreciate Matt Rhodes’ commitment to protecting the natural resources of this area and to sustaining the cranberry industry, which is so important to the economy of Southeastern Massachusetts. We also appreciate the partnership of the Town of Pembroke.”

“WRP is one of the many conservation options in the Farm Bill that are available to cranberry growers,” said Jeffrey LaFleur, Executive Director of the Cape Cod Cranberry Growers Association. “NRCS is a great partner in assisting growers in evaluating the land management practices that can be implemented to preserve and protect our water supplies.”

Since 1995, NRCS has provided more than \$4.1 million to protect and restore 524 acres of wetland in Massachusetts through WRP.

In addition to the 14,000 harvested acres of bogs in cranberry production, Massachusetts cranberry growers own and control approximately 48,000 acres of upland and wetland support lands. On average, every planted acre of cranberries is supported by three to four acres of surrounding wetlands and uplands. These supporting wetlands and uplands provide open space, wildlife habitat and groundwater recharge in an area otherwise stressed from urbanization.

Of the approximately 1,000 cranberry growers in North America, 400 are in Massachusetts. About 70 percent of these growers are small family farms with less than 20 acres of bog. The Massachusetts cranberry crop is valued at more than \$76 million and employs about 5,500 people.

###