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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NRCS WILL RESTORE AND PROTECT FLOOD-PRONE LANDS IN NEW HAMPSHIRE WITH ECONOMIC RECOVERY FUNDING

DURHAM, March 10, 2009—The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will provide assistance to eligible landowners in New Hampshire through the floodplain easement component of its Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program, State Conservationist George Cleek announced today. The funds will be used to restore frequently flooded land on working agricultural or forest lands and associated floodplains to their natural state and create jobs.

“We will be working with landowners who voluntarily agree to restore the floodplains to their natural condition and function by placing their land into permanent easements and installing recommended restoration practices,” Cleek said. “These easements will restore environmentally sensitive lands in riparian corridors and wooded bottomlands that are vital for fish and wildlife habitat and to mitigate downstream flooding.”

The EWP Program’s floodplain easement component allows NRCS to purchase easements on lands damaged by flooding. The restored floodplain will generate many public benefits, such as increased flood protection, enhanced fish and wildlife habitat, improved water quality, and a reduced need for future public disaster assistance. Other benefits include reduced energy consumption when certain agricultural activities and practices are eliminated and increased carbon sequestration as permanent vegetative cover is re-established.

Eligible land must have been damaged by flooding in the last 12 months, or twice in the last ten years.

The funding, obtained from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, includes both technical and financial assistance to acquire easements and restore the floodplains. All funds will be spent on targeted projects that can be completed with economic stimulus funding. The goal is to have all floodplain easements acquired by December 2009 and floodplains restored by December 2010.

Cleek said green jobs can be created in rural New Hampshire communities when landowners install conservation practices on the land entered into easement. Jobs will be created mostly in the engineering, biology and construction fields when trees and native grasses are planted and the hydrology of the floodplain is restored.

Eligible landowners can sign up for these easements from March 9 – 27, 2009 at their local NRCS/USDA Service Center. Visit <http://www.nh.nrcs.usda.gov> for locations.

For information about EWP Program floodplain easements, please visit <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/ewp/Floodplain/index.html>.

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