



United States Department of Agriculture  
Natural Resources Conservation Service

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# NEWS RELEASE

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## **NRCS ANNOUNCES RHODE ISLAND WILL RECEIVE \$6.45 MILLION IN DISASTER RELIEF FUNDS STEMMING FROM THE HISTORIC FLOODS IN 2010 AND HURRICANE IRENE**

WARWICK, RI (January 24, 2012) – R. Phou Vongkhamdy, NRCS Rhode Island State Conservationist announced that Rhode Island will receive important disaster assistance to help communities recover and rebuild after nearly a year in which a wave of natural disasters including the historic floods of 2010 and Hurricane Irene swept across the region. The funding for Rhode Island totals \$6.45 million through the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program which provides financial and technical assistance to rebuild and repair infrastructure on land damaged from the floods and hurricane. Nationally, 26 States will receive a total of \$215.7 million in funds to address public safety and restoration efforts on private, public, and Tribal lands.

"This is particularly beneficial for the Rhode Island economy. When funding is allocated to a project, NRCS provides financial and technical assistance to a local sponsor who in turn contracts the heavy construction work to local contractors, thus spurring the creation of jobs," said Vongkhamdy. The projects funded under EWP include removing debris from waterways, protecting eroded stream banks, and reseeding damaged areas. Of the total \$6.45 million in funding, \$6 million will be used to rebuild and repair infrastructure at three sites damaged from the historic floods in 2010. Among the sites, funds are being allotted for two sites in Pawtucket, RI to complete permanent repairs to multiple sections of the Blackstone River wall. The Laurel Avenue Stream Bank Stabilization Project in Coventry, RI will receive additional funding in order to implement permanent improvements to restore the streambed and stabilize the banks of the Pawtuxet River adjacent to two local mill buildings that are situated below the Laurel Avenue Bridge and Mill Pond Dam. The remaining \$450,000 in funds will be spent on two projects to remove debris impairments resulting from Hurricane Irene. These projects include debris removal within the Pocasset River floodplain in Cranston and Johnston, RI as well as, removal of debris within the floodplains of the Wood, Pawcatuck and Queens Rivers traversing six southern Rhode Island communities.

The EWP Program is designed to help people and conserve natural resources by relieving imminent hazards to life and property caused by floods, fires, windstorms, and other natural occurrences. All projects undertaken, with the exception of the purchase of floodplain easements, must have a project sponsor. Traditionally, NRCS may bear up to 75 percent of the construction cost of emergency measures where the remaining 25 percent must come from local sources and can be in the form of cash or in-kind services. It should be noted that Senators Reed and Whitehouse supported provisions in the Supplemental Appropriations Bill to reduce the State's cost share to 10 percent from 25 percent for the EWP projects resulting from the floods in 2010, which will be a considerable cost savings for Rhode Island sponsors. For the two projects resulting from Hurricane Irene, the sponsor cost share is 25 percent.