

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Federal Disaster Assistance Funding Received for Tornado and Tropical Storm Relief**

AMHERST, MASSACHUSETTS, January 23, 2012 - USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) State Executive Director Richard Burke announced today an important package of disaster assistance to help farmers, land owners, communities and others recover and rebuild after a year in which a wave of natural disasters swept across the State. Massachusetts funding, totaling \$4.07 million, provides financial and technical assistance to help rebuild and repair land damaged on account of flooding and tornado disasters last year. Relief will be provided through Farm Service Agency's Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) and Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP).

The Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) program will contribute \$2.31 million to producers to help remove debris from farmland, grade and shape farmland, restore permanent fences and restore conservation structures damaged by a natural disaster. FSA county committees determine eligibility based on on-site inspections of damaged land and considering the type and extent of damage. For land to be eligible, the natural disaster must create new conservation problems.

The Emergency Forest Restoration Program (EFRP) program will provide \$1.76 million in payments to eligible owners of nonindustrial private forest (NIPF) land in order to carry out emergency measures to restore land damaged by a natural disaster.

“This emergency funding is extremely helpful to the residents of western Massachusetts who are still struggling to recover in the wake of multiple natural disasters, including tropical storm Irene,” said Congressman John Olver. “Local farmers can utilize Emergency Conservation Funds to defray the enormous expenses associated with bringing their fields back to workable land. Additionally, the Emergency Watershed Protection program will help our local towns pay for some of the infrastructure projects that were necessary to eliminate the hazards caused by extreme flooding and erosion.”

USDA immediately responds to disasters across the country, ranging from record floods, droughts and tropical storms, with direct support, disaster assistance, technical assistance, and access to credit. In the past 3 years, USDA provided 103,000 loans to family farmers totaling \$14.6 billion. Over 50 percent of the loans went to beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers.

For further information please contact your local USDA-FSA Office.