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USDA-NRCS ANOUNCES EMERGENCY WATERSHED PROTECTION PROGRAM IN PUERTO RICO

Hato Rey, PR August 26, 2011 - The U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Caribbean Area, is accepting applications under the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program as a result of Hurricane Irene.

The Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP) was set up by Congress to respond to emergencies created by natural disasters. It is designed to relieve imminent hazards to life and property caused by natural occurrences. The EWP Program helps landowners, operators, and individuals with a common problem, implement emergency recovery measures to relieve imminent hazards to life or property created by a natural disaster that causes a sudden impairment of a watershed. It is generally not an individual assistance program.

In order to become eligible, EWP projects require local sponsors, who must represent a legal subdivision of state government, the state itself, a local unit of government, a municipality, or a conservation district. NRCS may bear up to 75 percent of the construction cost of emergency measures or up to 90 percent in limited resource areas. The remaining cost-share must come from local sources and can be in the form of cash or in-kind services, or a combination of cash and in-kind services.

EWP work is not limited to any one set of prescribed measures. A case by case investigation of the needed work is made by NRCS. EWP work can include: removing debris from stream channels, road culverts, and bridges, reshaping and protecting eroded banks, correcting damaged drainage facilities, repairing levees and structures, reseeding damaged areas, and purchasing floodplain easements.

All applications must be submitted within 60 days of the disaster beginning on August 23, 2011. To request EWP assistance or to learn more about the program contact Damaris Medina, EWP Program Coordinator at 787-766-5206 x232 or damaris.medina@pr.usda.gov.

Information about all NRCS programs in the Caribbean Area are available online at www.pr.nrcs.usda.gov/programs