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USDA to Invest \$84 Million to Help Communities in 13 States Recover from Natural Disasters

Auburn, Ala., Feb. 26, 2015 –USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) will invest an additional \$84 million through the [Emergency Watershed Protection Program](#) (EWP) to help disaster recovery efforts through more than 150 projects in 13 states, including Alabama.

“EWP helps communities, including those here in Alabama, perform much needed recovery projects to address damage to watersheds from floods, hurricanes and other natural disasters,” said Dr. William Puckett, NRCS state conservationist in Alabama.

EWP provides critical resources to local sponsors to help communities eliminate imminent hazards to life and property caused by floods, fires, windstorms and other natural occurrences. EWP is an emergency recovery program.

The funds support a variety of recovery projects, including clearing debris-clogged waterways, stabilizing stream banks, fixing jeopardized water control structures and stabilizing soils after wildfires.

In Alabama, EWP projects will help restore stream corridors, remove debris, curb erosion problems and prevent future flooding. In April 2014, torrential rains in south Alabama and a series of tornadoes across central and north Alabama led to millions in damages in several communities. Damages include eroding stream banks that are threatening public utilities, nearby neighborhoods and infrastructure. Gullies are also a major concern which are undermining flood control features as well as impacting local residences. In addition, increased sediment loading in streams is a concern for local historical landmarks, state parks and the Mobile Bay ecosystem.

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The tornados resulted in debris laden streams with reduced flow, possibly increasing flooding. NRCS is collaborating with local municipalities, counties, and RC&D councils to repair storm damage on 32 sites in Baldwin County, City of Daphne, City of Fairhope, City of Graysville, City of Magnolia Springs, City of Spanish Fort, Coffee County, Geneva County, Limestone County, Robertsdale and Tuscaloosa County. NRCS is contributing \$2.9 million towards these projects.

“EWP is an outstanding program because it helps our small, rural communities address natural disasters that have affected their infrastructure and natural resources. It gives them a chance to use emergency assistance and be involved in the process,” Puckett said.

EWP work must be sponsored by a public agency of the state, tribal, county or city government. NRCS provides 75 percent of the funds for the project; the public organization pays the remaining 25 percent. EWP allows NRCS to put its engineering expertise to work in a variety of places – both rural and urban.

For more information on NRCS programs, [visit www.nrcs.usda.gov/GetStarted](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/GetStarted) or a [local USDA service center](#).

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