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NEWS RELEASE

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NRCS Provides Financial Help to Cochise County for Horseshoe Two Fire Recovery

WILLCOX, Ariz. August 8, 2011 – The potential for flooding and erosion is a serious threat to those in the areas consumed by the Horseshoe Two fire. To help reduce this flooding danger, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is providing more than \$164,000 of financial help through its Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWP).

Impacts from a wildfire go beyond burnt vegetation. The potential for severe soil erosion and accelerated water runoff exists after a wildfire due to the lack of plant material to stabilize the soil. Soil erosion and water runoff can cause severe damage to property and pose safety hazards. NRCS is working with Cochise County in recovery efforts in the aftermath of the Horseshoe Two fire.

The total project costs are estimated to be \$218,900. Seventy-five percent of the financial assistance is provided through EWP funds, and Cochise County, the EWP sponsor, is providing the remaining 25 percent. NRCS administers the EWP Program, which responds to emergencies created by natural disasters, such as wildfires and floods. Funding for the program is provided through emergency congressional appropriations. Additional EWP funds may be available and NRCS will notify the local sponsors and the public if funding becomes available.

“Cochise County has been working diligently to provide resources to help those affected by the Monument and Horseshoe Two fires. As the sponsor for this project, they have done a good job directing NRCS to sites they want assistance with, and we can therefore provide our technical knowledge alongside theirs to develop quality EWP plans. It has been a collaborative effort between NRCS, Cochise County, Law Enforcement Office, Forest Service, and Prison,” said Gerry Gonzalez, Douglas NRCS Field Office District Conservationist.

After NRCS and Cochise County assessed properties at greatest risk of erosion and flooding, the county selected 13 sites, assorted residences, lodges, and infrastructure in the Portal, Paradise and Whitetail Canyon communities. The County will install several treatments. Some of the most common are sandbags, concrete barriers and ditch clearing/widening to assist in flood control and straw wattles for erosion control.

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NRCS Provides Financial Help to Cochise County for Horseshoe Two Fire Recovery Continued..

Sandbags are a simple yet highly effective way to prevent or reduce flood water damage around your home. Properly filled and placed sandbags act as a barrier to divert moving water, surface drainage and sediment around, instead of through, buildings. Through this method does not guarantee a water-tight seal, it does provide effective protection in most situations. Consult the Arizona NRCS website for more detailed information, www.az.nrcs.usda.gov.

NRCS is also providing conservation planning to farmers and ranchers who have been impacted or are in close proximity to areas that were affected by the wildfire. Conservation planning is a fundamental starting point for maintaining and improving the natural resources that support a productive and profitable agricultural operation. Following a natural disaster, such as a wildfire, conservation planning can help restore the production of the land.

“NRCS is here to provide technical and financial assistance. The Willcox NRCS field office is working diligently beside farmers and ranchers as well as Cochise County to supply the assistance and resources needed to help to protect our communities,” said Chase Skaarer, Willcox NRCS Field Office Range Management Specialist.

Cochise County determines the sites receiving EWP assistance for the Horseshoe Two fire area, due to their role as program sponsor. For more information about participating in EWP please contact Cochise County Engineer, Karen Riggs, at 520-432-9301. Contact your local field office in Willcox at 520-384-2229 for more information in receiving technical assistance on your property.

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