

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
April 23, 2004

**CONTACT: MARIL E. ALSUP**  
Public Affairs Specialist  
(413) 253-4314 or (413) 265-5057  
maril.alsup@ma.usda.gov

## EARTH DAY BRINGS GREEN TO DOUGLAS



**Douglas, MA** - The town received welcome news with which to celebrate Earth Day today when Congressman Richard Neal, USDA Rural Development State Director, David Tuttle, Steve McCurdy of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection and Denise Chan of State Senator Richard Moore's office arrived at the Douglas Municipal Center with over \$8 million to fund improvements to the towns' wastewater treatment facility.

Built in 1974, the towns' current treatment facility is undersized and operating at capacity. Moreover as the population of Douglas has increased, the need to provide additional public sewer service to areas that previously lacked such services has also increased. The upgraded wastewater treatment facility will improve water quality in the Mumford and Blackstone Rivers and improve the overall quality of the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage corridor and the Blackstone River Valley Greenway.

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection has provided the lion's share of the funds necessary to finance the improvements in Douglas with \$7.7 million in State Revolving Funds. The Massachusetts State Revolving Fund (SRF) for water pollution abatement projects was established to provide a low-cost funding mechanism to assist municipalities in complying with federal and state water quality requirements. The SRF Program is jointly administered by the Division of Municipal Services of the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the Massachusetts Water Pollution Abatement Trust. Each year DEP solicits projects from Massachusetts municipalities and wastewater districts to be considered for subsidized loans. The current subsidy is provided via a 2% interest loan. In recent years the program has operated with \$200-\$300 million per year, representing the financing of fifty to seventy projects annually.

-MORE-

“Douglas is one of many communities faced with the prospect of upgrading or replacing obsolete treatment facilities. The SRF program offers critical capital to accomplish that goal,” said DEP Commissioner Robert W. Gollidge, Jr. in a statement regarding today’s event. “These projects are a vital part of our mission to protect the environment and the public health.”

The United States Department of Agriculture’s contribution to the Douglas sewer system upgrades includes a \$631,000 Water and Waste Disposal Grant. “USDA Rural Development is committed to the future of rural communities and families,” said State Director David Tuttle. “It is my hope that our financial support for the improvements being made to Douglas’ wastewater treatment facility will ensure that the environment we leave our children and our grandchildren proves a healthy and strong inheritance.”

In September 2002, the Town of Douglas received a \$580,000 loan-grant combination through USDA Rural Development’s 2002 Farm Bill allocations. The town used the federal funding to replace an old water main and to install approximately 7,000 linear feet of new water main on Davis and Main Streets.

Through his representative Denise Chan, State Senator Richard Moore added, “Once again, an effective partnership among federal, state, and local government is helping Douglas and the Blackstone Valley to protect our environment at an affordable cost. We all win through this type of cooperative effort spearheaded by effective local leadership.”

USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs that will support increasing economic opportunity and improve the quality of life for rural residents. As a venture capital entity, Rural Development provides equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure.

###

