

**For Immediate Release
For More Information:**

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**Public Drinking Water Protection Program
Encourages Community Participation**
Scituate Reservoir and associated communities

KINGSTON, R.I. --September 30, 2002--The University of Rhode Island Cooperative Extension (URI CE) is partnering with the Rhode Island Department of HEALTH to carry out the State's Source Water Assessment Program. This public drinking water protection program, established by amendments to the federal Safe Drinking Water Act, assesses pollution risks to public water supplies and is now underway for the towns of Scituate, Foster, Glocester, Johnston and the city of Cranston. It encompasses all public water supplies in these communities from the Scituate Reservoir System to public wells serving restaurants and campgrounds. In addition to the Scituate Reservoir System, which has a watershed spanning over 59,000 acres, there are over 135 public wells located throughout these five communities.

URI CE and HEALTH will be holding an introductory meeting on **Monday, October 21st, 2002 from 4 to 6 PM at the North Scituate Community House**, 546 West Greenville Road (Rte. 116), North Scituate, RI. The meeting is open to all interested citizens, organizations, water suppliers, and municipal leaders and will present an introduction to Rhode Island's Source Water Assessment Program, an overview of the

public water supplies in these five communities, basics on drinking water protection and land use impacts to water quality. The meeting will also allow participants to review land use maps of the water supplies and their protection areas, and identify existing water quality issues, concerns, and protection efforts.

“This project is unique to involve local citizen participation,” noted Holly Burdett of the URI CE Home*A*Syst Program. “Not only do the local residents have the most at stake in protecting local drinking water supplies, but their knowledge of the surrounding landscape, existing concerns, and protection efforts are so valuable to the success of this program and the ultimate protection of these drinking water resources.”

The Scituate Reservoir system, which is owned and operated by the Providence Water Supply Board, is Rhode Island’s largest public water supply providing drinking water to 60% of the state’s residents. The Scituate Reservoir system supplies the cities and towns of Providence, North Providence, Cranston, and Johnston, and distributes water to other public water suppliers in Providence, Kent, and Bristol Counties, including the Kent County Water Authority and the Bristol County Water Authority.

URI CE and HEALTH will use the information provided by participants in the **October 21st** meeting to begin the Source Water Assessments, which are a systematic study of natural and land use related factors that affect pollution risks to drinking water supply sources. “The

goal is to tailor the Assessments based on the existing efforts and future needs of the communities involved,” explains Burdett. Future assistance will also be available from URI CE to help communities with planning and education needs identified through this project.

Interested residents and groups will also have the opportunity to sit in on the detailed assessment process for the Scituate Reservoir system and its watershed. Two meetings, led by staff from the URI CE Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials Program, will be scheduled for December 2002 and January 2003 in Scituate. Participants will review preliminary assessment results, and identify and develop future planning and protection needs.

Burdett relates, “Many people live, go to work or school, or attend functions in areas served by the Scituate Reservoir system. This is a great opportunity for RI residents to become more aware and involved in protecting this resource.”

For more information and to register for the **October 21st** meeting, call **Holly Burdett, URI CE Home*A*Syst at (401) 874-5398.** For more information about Rhode Island’s Source Water Assessment Program contact Clay Commons, Program Coordinator, HEALTH, Office of Drinking Water Quality at (401) 222-7769.

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