

Washington Shrubsteppe SAFE

State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE)



Overview

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife are partnering on a State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) project to enroll agricultural land in Washington state in portions of Adams, Douglas, Grant, Lincoln, and Okanogan counties. The purpose of the Washington Shrubsteppe SAFE is to conserve shrubsteppe habitat at a landscape scale and increase connectivity between patches of native shrubsteppe habitat to benefit shrubsteppe dependent species including multiple birds, mammals, and pollinators.

Background

SAFE is part of the USDA Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). CRP is a federally funded voluntary program that contracts with landowners and agricultural producers to establish and manage vegetative covers that control soil erosion, improve water quality, and provide wildlife habitat.

SAFE is a unique type of CRP that offers organizations the opportunity to partner with the USDA to establish habitat for high-priority wildlife species on agricultural land. SAFE sponsors work with the USDA to identify the wildlife species, the vegetative cover that provides habitat for the target species, and the location in the state where the habitat is needed. A partnership is formed between the SAFE sponsor and the USDA, and federal funds are made available to allow for CRP enrollment on eligible land within the SAFE project location.

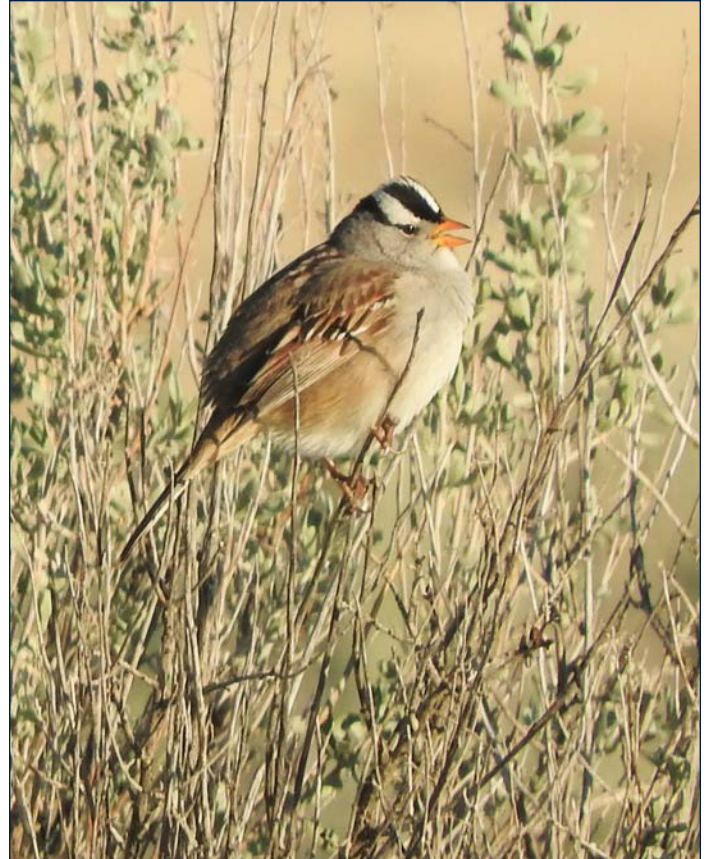
Target Wildlife Species

The Washington Shrubsteppe SAFE project is to provide habitat for of Greater sage-grouse, Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, and Columbia Basin pygmy rabbit, which are all state or federally listed species, as well as other shrubsteppe dependent species including multiple birds, mammals, and pollinators.

Habitat

Landowners and agricultural producers participating in Washington Shrubsteppe SAFE are required to develop a

conservation plan with assistance from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) or a technical service provider. The conservation plan will provide details on how to plant, establish, and manage habitat for Greater sage grouse, Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, Columbia Basin pygmy rabbit, pollinators, and mule deer. After the habitat is established, it will need to be maintained and managed by activities such as herbicide and mechanical weed treatments, light disking, rotary clipping, prescribed burning, harrowing, and inter-seeding to create plant diversity for the benefit of wildlife and enhancement of the permanent cover. Proper habitat establishment, maintenance, and management will maximize benefits for Greater sage grouse, Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, Columbia Basin pygmy rabbit, and other shrubsteppe dependent species.



Photos by Eric Braaten, WDFW

Project Location

The Washington Shrubsteppe SAFE project area encompasses 4,535 square miles (about 2.9 million acres) within portions of Adams, Douglas, Grant, Lincoln, and Okanogan counties. These counties were designated as the general project region because they encompass most of Washington's critical existing Greater sage grouse, Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, and Columbia Basin pygmy rabbit habitat.

Eligible CRP Practices

This SAFE project uses the following CRP practices:

- ◆ CP38A-22 – SAFE Riparian Forest Buffer (MPL not eligible for this SAFE project)
- ◆ CP38E-4D – SAFE Permanent Wildlife Habitat, non-easement

Haying and Grazing

Although the 2018 Farm Bill allows haying and grazing on all CRP practices, haying, and grazing are not allowed on any Washington State SAFE practices.

Eligibility Requirements

Because SAFE is part of CRP, certain land and participant eligibility rules apply. To begin with, land must be in the project area and meet cropping history. CRP participant eligibility rules also apply to SAFE.

Payments and Incentives

In exchange for participation in CRP SAFE, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) provides participants with annual per acre rental payments, cost-share to assist with habitat establishment expenses, and in some cases additional monetary incentives.

For More Information

This fact sheet is provided for informational purposes only; other restrictions or requirements may apply. Consult your local FSA office for details. For more information, contact your local service center and USDA Farm Service Agency office: farmers.gov/service-locator.





Photo by Eric Braaten, WDFW

Washington Shrubsteppe SAFE Project Map



Legend

-  FSA County Boundary
-  Washington Shrubsteppe SAFE Project Area