

Wisconsin Western Prairie Habitat Restoration SAFE

State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE)



Overview

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) are partners in implementing a State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) project to enroll agricultural land in parts of Polk and St. Croix counties. The purpose of the Western Prairie Habitat Restoration Area is to restore 20,000 acres to pre-settlement vegetation types that provide nesting, brood rearing, and foraging habitats for grassland birds.

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 goal of the Western Prairie Habitat Restoration Area project is to provide habitat for Henslow's and Grasshopper Sparrow, Loggerhead Shrike, Eastern and Western Meadowlark, Dickcissel, and Bobolink. These obligate grassland bird species are important to Wisconsin because they are Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) within the Wisconsin Wildlife Action Plan and they represent major management opportunities in this Ecological Landscape.

Habitat

Landowners and agricultural producers participating in Western Prairie Habitat Restoration Area 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 these SGCN grassland birds. The habitat being established is diverse, native prairie that will increase the availability of short and mid grass habitat structure. After the habitat is established, it will need to be maintained and managed by either prescribed burning, mowing, or herbicide application to minimize encroachment of trees or shrubs and unwanted invasive plant species. Proper habitat establishment, maintenance, and management will maximize benefits for the targeted grassland birds.



Project Location

The Wisconsin Western Prairie Habitat Restoration SAFE project is located within portions of Polk and St. Croix counties.

Eligible CRP Practices

This SAFE project uses the following CRP practices:

- ◆ CP38B-9, SAFE Shallow Water Areas for Wildlife
- ◆ CP38B-23, SAFE Wetland Restoration
- ◆ CP38B-23A, SAFE Wetland Restoration, Non-Floodplain
- ◆ CP38E-25, SAFE Rare and Declining Habitat

Haying and Grazing

Haying and Grazing activities are not allowed on any Wisconsin Western Prairie Habitat Restoration 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.



Wisconsin Western Prairie Habitat Restoration SAFE Project Map



Legend

-  FSA County Boundary
-  Wisconsin Western Prairie Habitat Restoration SAFE Project Area