

Tennessee Bobwhite Restoration SAFE

State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE)



Overview

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency and Quail Forever of Tennessee are partners in implementing a State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) project to enroll agricultural land in fourteen counties in west Tennessee, eight counties in middle Tennessee, and six counties in east Tennessee. The purpose of the Tennessee Bobwhite Restoration SAFE is to develop critical vegetative covers that will provide high quality nesting, brood-rearing, protective woody cover, and winter thermal cover necessary for Northern Bobwhite (*Colinus virginianus*) and other declining wildlife species that depend on native “early successional” vegetation types and travel corridors between existing habitat blocks.

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 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 sponsors 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 Tennessee Bobwhite Restoration SAFE project is to provide habitat for Northern Bobwhite. Bobwhite quail are important to Tennessee because they have experienced steep decline due to vast changes in farming, other land use practices, and urban sprawl. Bobwhites have the highest wild population density in West TN but continue to experience declines even in those counties.

Habitat

Landowners and agricultural producers participating in Tennessee Bobwhite Restoration SAFE are required to develop a conservation plan with assistance from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) or a technical service provider (partner planning biologist). The conservation plan will provide details on how to plant, establish, and manage habitat for bobwhite quail. Early successional grassland/shrubland plant communities consist of native wildflowers, native warm season grasses (NWSG), and a select percentage of native shrubs. The required cover type must meet NRCS standards and specifications and will include a composition of native wildflowers (forbs), native warm season grasses, and native shrubs while including a small percentage of bare ground for maneuverability. This composition provides the adequate amount of food, escape and loafing cover, and nesting material.

Required management activities for CP38-E SAFE must be completed in years 4–6 of a 10-year contract and in years 4–9 for a 15-year contract. The required management activity practice may not exceed 50% of the enrolled acreage in one year unless recommended and approved by the planning biologist. Required management activities include prescribed burning, strip or block disking, herbicide application (whole field or spot treatment), and legume/forb inter-seeding. Required management activities will not take place during the Primary Nesting Season (PNS), April 15–July 1, unless otherwise approved by NRCS or a partner biologist.



Photo by Hunter Bridges, Quail Forever Farm Bill Biologist

Project Location

The Tennessee Bobwhite Restoration SAFE project is located within four ecoregions, including the the Mississippi Valley Loess Plains, Southeastern Plains, Interior Plateau, and Ridge and Valley. This Tennessee Bobwhite Restoration SAFE project exists exclusively within the boundaries of Tennessee. The counties targeted in the proposal include: Carroll, Coffee, Crockett, Dyer, Fayette, Franklin, Gibson, Giles, Greene, Hancock, Hardeman, Hawkins, Haywood, Henry, Lauderdale, Lawrence, Lincoln, Madison, Maury, McMinn, McNairy, Meigs, Montgomery, Obion, Rhea, Robertson, Tipton, and Weakley.

Eligible CRP Practices

This SAFE project uses the following CRP practices:

- ◆ CP38E-4D
- ◆ CP38E-12

Haying and Grazing

Haying and Grazing is not permitted for CP38-E SAFE practices. This restriction applies to both emergency and non-emergency haying and grazing.

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.



Tennessee Bobwhite Restoration SAFE Project Map



Legend

-  FSA County Boundary
-  Tennessee Bobwhite Restoration SAFE Project Area