

Colorado Western Slope Grouse Conservation SAFE

State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE)



Overview

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Colorado Parks and Wildlife (CPW) are partners in implementing a State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) project to enroll agricultural land in portions of 6 counties on the Western-Slope of Colorado. The purpose of the Colorado Western Slope Grouse Conservation SAFE is to restore and enhance habitat for the Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse, Greater Sage-grouse, and the Gunnison Sage-Grouse, all of which are species of concern in the state of Colorado. This project targets the conversion of cropland to a specific cover providing a superior habitat for at-risk grouse species.

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 Colorado Western Slope Grouse Conservation SAFE project is to provide habitat for Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse, Greater Sage-grouse, and the Gunnison Sage-grouse. These bird species are important to Colorado because of the social and economic benefits to local communities in the area as well as their historic presence and role in the ecology of the region.

Habitat

Landowners and agricultural producers participating in Colorado Western Slope Grouse Conservation 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 Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse, Greater Sage-grouse, and the Gunnison Sage-grouse. The habitat being established is diverse grass and shrublands including grasses, shrubs, forbs, and legumes. After the habitat is established, it will need to be maintained and managed by disking, grazing, and interseeding as needed and authorized. Proper habitat establishment, maintenance, and management will maximize benefits for the targeted bird species in this project.



Photo Courtesy: Wayne Lewis, Colorado Parks and Wildlife.

Project Location

The Colorado Western Slope Grouse Conservation SAFE project location is portions or entirety of Dolores, San Miguel, Montezuma, Routt, Rio Blanco, and Moffat counties in the areas of the Dolores, San Miguel, Little Snake and Yampa Rivers.

Eligible CRP Practices

This SAFE project uses the following CRP practices:

- ◆ CP38E-4D, SAFE Permanent Wildlife Habitat
- ◆ CP38E-12, SAFE Wildlife Food Plot (Only eligible when used in conjunction with CP38E-4D)
- ◆ CP38A-33, SAFE Habitat Buffers for Upland Birds
- ◆ CP38E-42, SAFE Pollinator Habitat

Haying and Grazing

Acreage enrolled in this SAFE project is not eligible for emergency or non-emergency haying and grazing. Grazing is only authorized as a required management activity.

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 Courtesy: Trevor Balzar, Colorado Parks and Wildlife.

Colorado Western Slope Grouse Conservation SAFE Project Map



Legend

-  FSA County Boundary
-  Colorado Western Slope Grouse Conservation SAFE Project Area