

# Iowa Gaining Ground SAFE

State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE)



## Overview

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Iowa Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Bureau are partners in implementing a State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) project to enroll agricultural land in counties across the state within 3-miles of existing protected wildlife areas. The purpose of the Iowa Gaining Ground SAFE is to restore a diversity of native grassland habitat types in landscapes where it will be the most beneficial for 5 high priority species of grassland songbirds.

## 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 Iowa Gaining Ground SAFE project is to provide habitat for Bobolink, Brown Thrasher, Grasshopper Sparrow, Loggerhead Shrike, and Western Meadowlark. These grassland birds are important to Iowa because all 5 species are in long term decline and CRP provides valuable habitat to recover these species. The Iowa Wildlife Action Plan lists all 5 birds as species of greatest conservation need, whose populations can benefit from additional native grassland habitats.

## Habitat

Landowners and agricultural producers participating in Iowa Gaining Ground 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 Bobolink, Brown Thrasher, Grasshopper Sparrow, Loggerhead Shrike, and Western Meadowlark. Offers must be a minimum of 10 acres if not immediately adjacent to an existing wildlife habitat complex. All offers will provide at least 2 of the following native grass habitat types: tall grass/low forbs, tall grass/high forbs, short grass/low forbs or short grass/high forbs. Providing all 4 habitat types is encouraged on larger offers to benefit other species like native pollinators and Monarchs. Winter cover, food plots and shrub planting are allowed, but not required. After the habitat is established, it will need to be maintained and managed by prescribed burning, grazing, interseeding, spraying, or disking on the habitat acres. Proper habitat establishment, maintenance, and management will maximize benefits for Bobolink, Brown Thrasher, Grasshopper Sparrow, Loggerhead Shrike, and Western Meadowlark.



Photo by Carl Kurtz.

## Project Location

The Iowa Gaining Ground SAFE project location is all or portions of Adair, Adams, Allamakee, Appanoose, Audubon, Benton, Black Hawk, Boone, Bremer, Buchanan, Buena Vista, Butler, Calhoun, Carroll, Cass, Cedar, Cerro Gordo, Cherokee, Chickasaw, Clarke, Clay, Clayton, Clinton, Crawford, Dallas, Davis, Decatur, Delaware, Des Moines, Dickinson, Dubuque, Emmet, Fayette, Floyd, Franklin, Fremont, Greene, Grundy, Guthrie, Hamilton, Hancock, Hardin, Harrison, Henry, Howard, Humboldt, Ida, Iowa, Jackson, Jasper, Jefferson, Johnson, Jones, Keokuk, Kossuth, Lee, Linn, Louisa, Lucas, Lyon, Madison, Mahaska, Marion, Marshall, Mills, Mitchell, Monona, Monroe, Montgomery, Muscatine, O'Brien, Osceola, Page, Palo Alto, Plymouth, Pocahontas, Polk, Pottawattamie, Poweshiek, Ringgold, Sac, Scott, Shelby, Sioux, Story, Tama, Taylor, Union, Van Buren, Wapello, Warren, Washington, Wayne, Webster, Winnebago, Winneshiek, Woodbury, Worth, and Wright counties within 3 miles of existing protected habitats.

## Eligible CRP Practices

This SAFE project uses the following CRP practices:

- ◆ CP38E-CP4D Permanent Wildlife Habitat
- ◆ CP38E-CP12 Wildlife Food Plot

## Haying and Grazing

Emergency haying and grazing is not authorized. Non-Emergency haying and grazing is authorized according to CRP non-emergency policies and as defined in an approved conservation plan.

## 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.

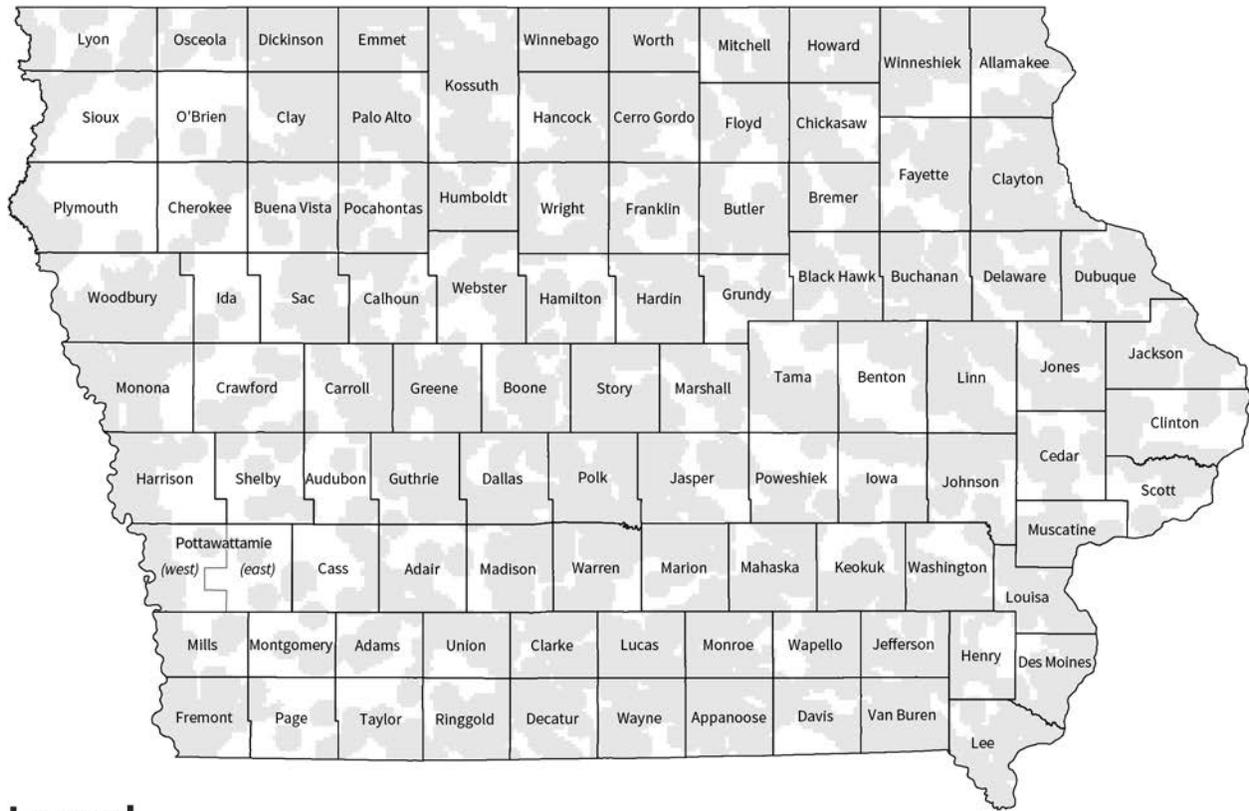
## For More Information

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](https://farmers.gov/service-locator) or nearest DNR office: [iowadnr.gov/crp](https://iowadnr.gov/crp).



Iowa Gaining Ground SAFE site, diverse native grassland habitat. Photo by Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

# Iowa Gaining Ground SAFE Project Map



## Legend

-  FSA County Boundary
-  Iowa Gaining Ground SAFE Project Area