

Mississippi, Alabama, Black Belt Prairie Restoration SAFE

State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE)



Overview

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Wildlife Mississippi are partners in implementing a State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) project to enroll agricultural land in 18 counties in Mississippi and Alabama along the Black Belt. The purpose of the Mississippi, Alabama, Black Belt Prairie Restoration SAFE is to improve through restoration, native grassland habitats for rare, threatened, endangered and declining species that are dependent on native prairie communities found within the Black Belt Prairie region of Mississippi and Alabama.

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 Mississippi, Alabama, Black Belt Prairie Restoration SAFE project is to provide habitat for Northern Bobwhite Quail, Bachman's Sparrow, Southern Combshell, Southern Clubshell, and Ovate Clubshell. These vulnerable and critically imperiled species are important to Mississippi and Alabama because the Black Belt Prairie region remains the most degraded ecosystem in Mississippi and Alabama with less than one percent of the ecosystem remaining.

Habitat

Landowners and agricultural producers participating in Mississippi, Alabama, Black Belt Prairie Restoration 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 Northern Bobwhite Quail, Bachman's Sparrow, Southern Combshell, Southern Clubshell, and Ovate Clubshell. The habitat being established is CP25, mixed stand of at least four native grass species, four native forb and legume species, and one native shrub species. After the habitat is established, it will need to be maintained and managed by herbicide applications, strip disking, and prescribe fire. Proper habitat establishment, maintenance, and management will maximize benefits for Northern Bobwhite Quail, Bachman's Sparrow, Southern Combshell, Southern Clubshell, and Ovate Clubshell.



Photo by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Project Location

The Mississippi, Alabama, Black Belt Prairie Restoration SAFE project location is in parts of:

Mississippi—Chickasaw, Clay, Kemper, Lee, Lowndes, Monroe, Noxubee, Oktibbeha, and Pontotoc counties.

Alabama—Dallas, Greene, Hale, Lowndes, Marengo, Montgomery, Pickens, Sumter, and Wilcox counties within the Black Belt Prairie region.

Eligible CRP Practices

This SAFE project uses the following CRP practices:

- ◆ CP38E-25, SAFE Rare and Declining Habitat

Haying and Grazing

No haying or grazing is allowed.

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.



Mississippi, Alabama, Black Belt Prairie Restoration SAFE Project Map



Legend

-  FSA County Boundary
-  Mississippi, Alabama, Black Belt Prairie Restoration SAFE Project Area