



## Conservation Reserve Program State Acres For wildlife Enhancement (SAFE)

### Overview

Owners and operators of certain cropland in designated geographic areas may enroll eligible land in a new continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) conservation practice titled State Acres For wildlife Enhancement (SAFE), also known as CP38.

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will conduct sign-up for SAFE on a continuous (ongoing) basis. Through continuous CRP sign-up, USDA accepts offers by producers, provided the land and producer meet certain eligibility requirements. Producers can offer land for enrollment in SAFE and other CRP programs at their local FSA service center.

USDA has approved SAFE proposals to address state and regional high-priority wildlife objectives. SAFE practices provide the flexibility to meet the specific needs of high-value wildlife species in a participating state or region. Conservation practices currently offered under CRP are fine-tuned through SAFE to improve, connect or create higher-quality habitat to promote healthier ecosystems in areas identified as essential to effective management of high-priority species. USDA's goal is to restore or enhance 500,000 acres of wildlife habitat.

Producers within a SAFE area can submit offers to voluntarily enroll acres in CRP contracts for 10-15 years (the contract length depends on the SAFE proposal authorized for the area). In exchange, producers receive annual CRP rental payments, incentives and cost-share assistance to establish habitat-enhancing natural covers on eligible land. Producers enrolling in CRP enter into contracts with USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC). FSA administers CRP on behalf of CCC.

### Eligibility Requirements

To be eligible under continuous sign-up practices, land must be in a SAFE project area and meet basic CRP eligibility requirements. Eligible land is cropland that was planted or considered planted to an agricultural commodity during four of the six years from 1996 to 2001. The land must be physically and legally capable of being planted in a normal manner to an agricultural commodity.

Producers with land within a SAFE geographic area may enroll in their state's SAFE project(s) provided they meet the following eligibility requirements:

- the offered acreage meets the cropping history requirement under CRP (four of the six years from 1996 to 2001);
- the site is located within a SAFE area and is appropriate for the practices associated with SAFE; and
- the cumulative acreage for all CP38 acreage enrolled in SAFE does not exceed the SAFE allocation (See Figure 1 located at the end of this fact sheet) for that state.

### Required Management Practices

Through SAFE, producers create habitat that is beneficial to the target high-priority wildlife species. This may involve planting trees, grasses, forbs or other species that help restore or improve wildlife habitat. Specific SAFE conservation practices are set forth in each state's SAFE project.

CCC requires that practices under SAFE be managed during the life of the contract. The management requirements are tailored to the individual practice.

Fishing and hunting are allowed on CRP-enrolled land, including SAFE. As with other conservation practices and programs under CRP, certain restrictions apply.

### Rental & Incentive Payments

CCC bases rental rates on the average value of dryland cash rent or the cash rent equivalent for the

past three years and adjusts rates to reflect the relative productivity of soils within each county. CCC calculates the maximum CRP rental rate in advance of enrollment. The individual soil rentals are available at the local FSA service center. While acceptance is not determined by a competitive offer process, producers may elect to receive an amount less than the maximum payment rate.

In addition to the payments described above, CCC will pay up to 50 percent of the eligible cost of establishing a permanent cover.

USDA may also provide the following benefits to participants in the SAFE practice:

- an up-front, one-time CRP Signing Incentive Payment (CRP-SIP) of \$100 per acre, which is made after the contract is approved; and
- a Practice Incentive Payment (PIP) equal to 40 percent of the eligible installation costs for SAFE practices. CCC issues this one-time payment after the practice is installed, eligible costs are verified and other payment eligibility criteria are met.

### **Contracts**

The effective date of the CRP contract is the first day of the month following the month of approval. In certain circumstances, producers may defer the effective date for up to six months.

### **High-Priority Species**

FSA created SAFE to benefit high-priority state wildlife conservation objectives through the restoration of vital habitat.

High-priority wildlife species may include:

- species that are listed as threatened, endangered or candidates for designation by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service;
- species that have suffered a significant population decline such as the lesser prairie chicken, sharp-tailed grouse or northern bobwhite quail; or
- socially or economically valuable species or those that provide significant social or economic value to the community. This includes salmon, steelhead, pollinators, game birds or other species that generate economic benefits or that are highly valued.

### **How SAFE Proposals Were Developed**

Wildlife needs and conservation priorities vary across geographic and ecological regions. Local and regional conservation groups, nonprofit organizations, government agencies, biologists, farmers, ranchers and others have the first-hand knowledge and experience to help address the needs of these high-priority species.

FSA's development of SAFE encourages producers, wildlife experts in state and federal agencies, the public, nonprofit organizations and others to work together. The goal was to design proposals to help farmers and ranchers to develop and maintain high-value wildlife habitats.

USDA accepted SAFE proposals developed by these organizations. All SAFE proposals were reviewed at the state level by an interdisciplinary team (State Technical Committee). The team reviewed the technical merits and benefits of each proposal and ranked each of the proposals on the potential to achieve the objectives of the program. FSA judged SAFE proposals to determine whether the selected practices would create the desired habitat. To be accepted by FSA, SAFE proposals had to be approved by qualified wildlife professionals and include a wildlife monitoring and evaluation plan. The proposals had to be based in science, using accepted techniques.

FSA hopes this flexible, results-oriented, locally led practice encourages proposals that benefit more than a single species and that it will address species that require a regional approach in portions of several states. SAFE builds on CRP's success of protecting and conserving the nation's natural resources such as habitat for wildlife species that are threatened, endangered or possess unique values.

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### **More About CRP**

CRP is a voluntary program that offers annual rental payments and cost-share assistance to establish long-term resource-conserving covers on eligible land. FSA makes annual rental payments based on the agriculture rental value of the land and provides cost-share assistance up to 50 percent of the participant's costs of establishing approved practices. The Food Security Act of 1985, as amended, authorizes CRP.

### **Cooperating Agencies**

FSA administers CRP with assistance from USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA's Forest Service, USDA's Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service, state agencies, and local soil and water conservation districts. Producers can find program details and offer acreage for enrollment at their local FSA service center, which is listed in telephone books under "United States Government, U.S. Department of Agriculture."

### **More Information**

Find more information about SAFE online at: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov>; click on Conservation Programs.

Find more information about FSA and its conservation programs on the FSA Web site at: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov>.

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**Figure 1.**

**State-by-State Breakdown of SAFE Acreage**

<b>State</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Acres</b>
Alabama	3,800	Nebraska	22,900
Alaska	1,000	Nevada	1,000
Arizona	1,300	New Hampshire	1,000
Arkansas	9,700	New Jersey	1,000
California	11,200	New Mexico	2,600
Colorado	11,700	New York	4,900
Connecticut	1,000	North Carolina	5,600
Delaware	1,000	North Dakota	27,000
Florida	3,800	Ohio	11,600
Georgia	4,800	Oklahoma	15,100
Hawaii	1,000	Oregon	5,500
Idaho	6,300	Pennsylvania	5,200
Illinois	24,600	Puerto Rico	1,000
Indiana	13,100	Rhode Island	1,000
Iowa	27,700	South Carolina	2,300
Kansas	30,100	South Dakota	20,700
Kentucky	8,600	Tennessee	7,100
Louisiana	5,200	Texas	39,400
Maine	1,000	Utah	2,100
Maryland	1,500	Vermont	1,000
Massachusetts	1,000	Virginia	4,300
Michigan	8,100	Washington	8,200
Minnesota	23,100	West Virginia	1,200
Mississippi	5,900	Wisconsin	10,900
Missouri	19,200	Wyoming	3,000
Montana	18,700	Reserve	50,000
		<b>Total</b>	<b>500,000</b>