

# Texas Lower Rio Grande Valley Thornscrub SAFE

State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE)



## Overview

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, American Forests, Rio Grande Joint Venture, Quail Forever are partners in implementing a State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) project to enroll agricultural land in 5 counties of the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas. The purpose of the Texas Lower Rio Grande Valley Thornscrub SAFE is to restore and maintain Tamaulipan thornscrub and associated shrubland and grassland habitats.

## 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.

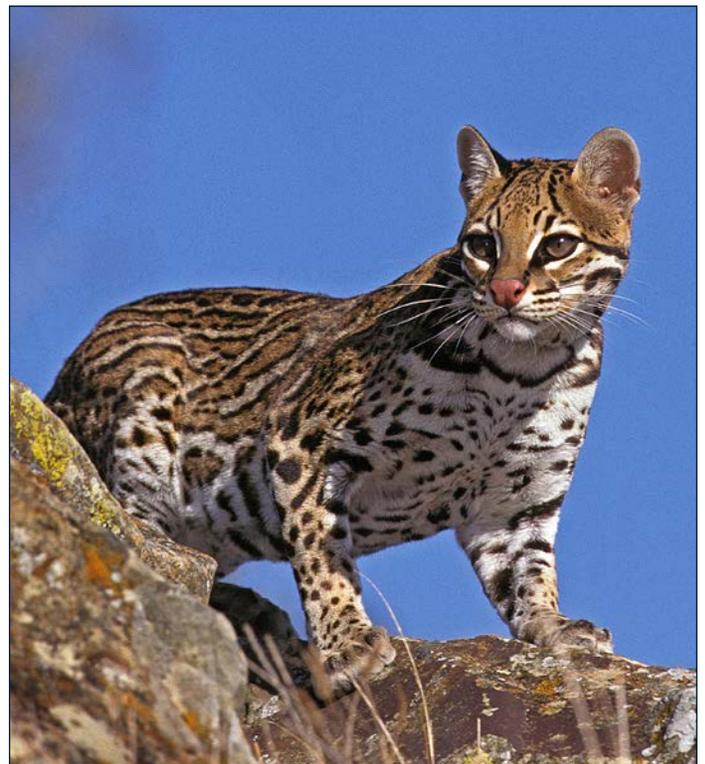
SAFE is a unique type of CRP that offers organizations the opportunity to partner with the USDA to establish habitat for high-priority wildlife species on agricultural land. SAFE sponsors work with the USDA to identify the wildlife species, the vegetative cover that provides habitat for the target species, 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 Texas Lower Rio Grande Valley Thornscrub SAFE project is to provide habitat for Ocelots and other Texas thornscrub dependent species. Ocelots are important to Texans because they are a charismatic imperiled species that is an iconic representative of a unique and important disappearing ecosystem.

## Habitat

Landowners and agricultural producers participating in Texas Lower Rio Grande Valley Thornscrub 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 Texas Ocelots. The habitat being established is highly diverse native thornscrub and associated grasslands. After the habitat is established, it will need to be maintained and managed by grassland habitats will need to be maintained and managed preferably with prescribed fire or other non-soil disturbing early successional habitat practices. Established diverse native brush should not be disturbed with mechanical treatments. Proper habitat establishment, maintenance, and management will maximize benefits for Ocelots and other native wildlife species.



## Project Location

The Texas Lower Rio Grande Valley Thornscrub SAFE project is located in Cameron, Hidalgo, Kenedy, Starr, and Willacy counties.

## Eligible CRP Practices

This SAFE project uses the following CRP practices:

- ◆ CP38E-4D SAFE Permanent Wildlife Habitat
- ◆ CP38E-25 SAFE Grass Rare and Declining Habitat
- ◆ CP38C-25 SAFE Tree Rare and Declining Habitat
- ◆ CP38A-33 SAFE Habitat Buffers for Upland Bird

## Haying and Grazing

Non-Emergency Haying or Grazing is not permitted on enrolled Woody Plants: CP38E-4D, CP38E-25, CP38C-25 at any time, and is not permitted on Herbaceous Cover: CP38E-4D, CP38E-33 acres except when conducted as a maintenance or mid-contract management activity prescribed and under guidance by NRCS or a qualified TSP.

Emergency Haying or Grazing is not permitted on enrolled Woody Plants: CP38E-4D, CP38E-25, CP38C-25.

Emergency Haying or Grazing is permitted on enrolled Herbaceous Cover: CP38E-4D, CP38E-33 according to 2-CRP Manual, Paragraph 681.

## 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

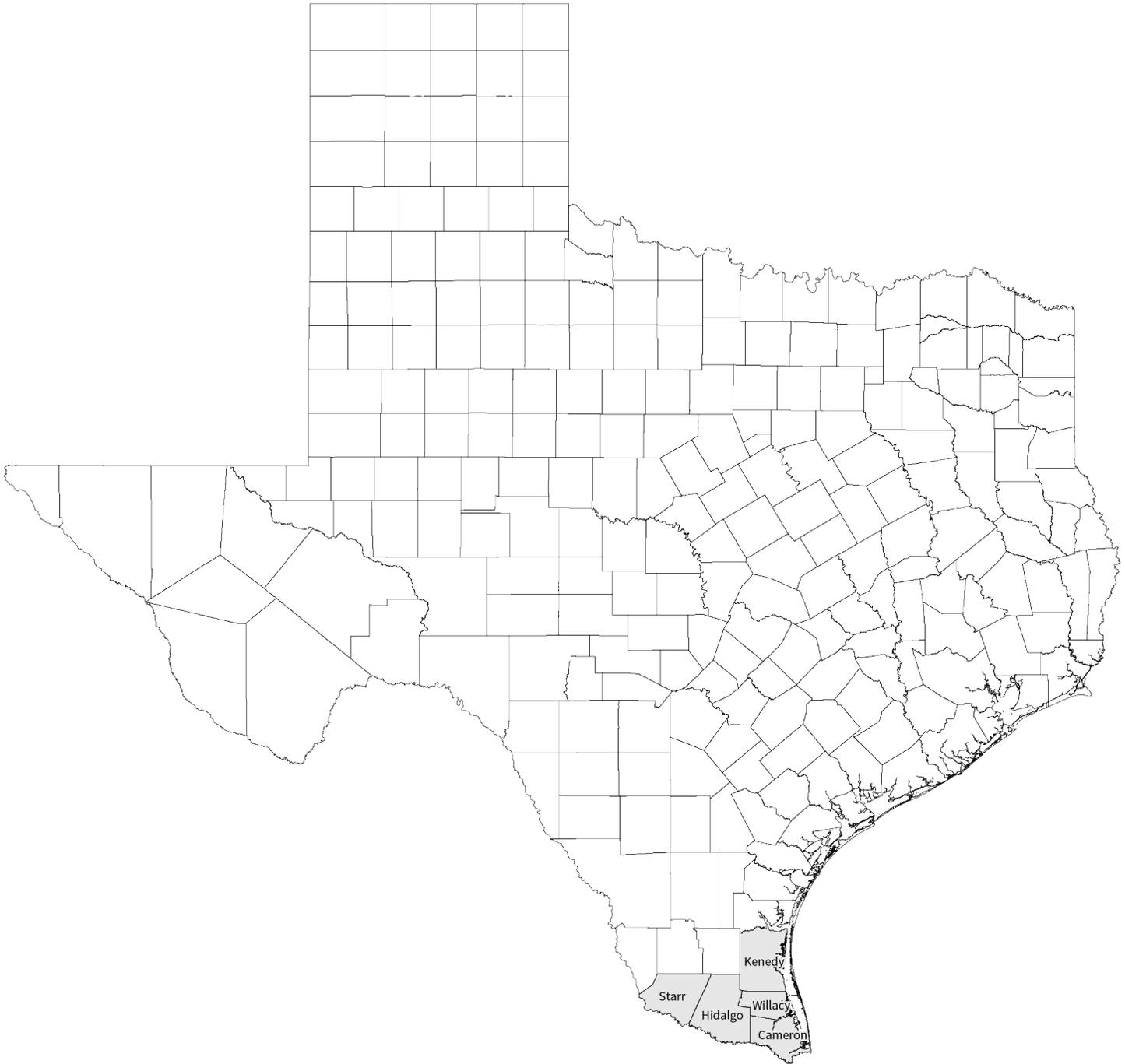
In exchange for participation in CRP SAFE, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) provides participants with annual per acre rental payments, cost-share to assist with habitat establishment expenses, and in some cases additional monetary incentives.

## 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).



# Texas Lower Rio Grande Valley Thornscrub SAFE Project Map



## Legend

-  FSA County Boundary
-  Texas Lower Rio Grande Valley Thornscrub SAFE Project Area