



Farm Service Agency

Conservation Reserve Program State Acres for Wildlife (SAFE) : Migratory Birds, Butterflies and Pollinators in Nebraska

FACT SHEET
MARCH 2021

Overview

The Migratory Birds, Butterflies and Pollinators Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) State Acres for Wildlife (SAFE) project is designed to provide private land owners a market-based financial incentive for restoring playa wetlands.

Playa wetlands are shallow depressions that often fill with water after spring rainstorms providing habitat for millions of migratory birds and recharging the underlying aquifers. There are three playa areas of Nebraska included in this CRP SAFE: Central Table Playas, Southwest Playas, and Rainwater Basin.

There are 37 Nebraska counties with land included in the project area: Adams, Banner, Butler, Chase, Cheyenne, Clay, Custer, Dawson, Deuel, Dundy, Fillmore, Franklin, Frontier, Furnas, Garden, Gosper, Hall, Hamilton, Harlan, Hayes, Hitchcock, Jefferson, Kearney, Keith, Kimball, Lincoln, Logan, Nuckolls, Perkins, Phelps, Polk, Saline, Seward, Thayer, Valley, Webster and York.

The purpose of this CRP SAFE is to restore playas to their proper function, providing benefits that include improved water quality, water recharge for the Ogallala Aquifer and habitat for migrating waterfowl, cranes and shorebirds.

Background

SAFE is part of the USDA Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). CRP is a federally funded voluntary program that contracts with agricultural producers so that environmentally sensitive land is not farmed or ranched, but instead used for conservation benefits. CRP participants establish permanent, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees (known as “covers”) to control soil erosion, improve water quality and develop wildlife habitat. In return, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. CRP is authorized by the Food Security Act of 1985 and was reauthorized by the 2018 Farm Bill.



Photo: Rainwater Basin Joint Venture

Program Basics

Land owners within the targeted project area will contact their local USDA Service Center to determine eligibility of their playa acres. The minimum enrollment per offer is two acres, and the maximum enrollment per offer is 160 acres.

This project uses a competitive bid process, whereby landowners submit an offer to enroll their playa acres for the amount they are willing to accept as an annual payment. Offers must be between the average NASS irrigated rental rates and dryland rates. Contracts are for a period of 10-15 years. Offers compete against each other within each playa complex, with 50 percent of the offers being accepted in each complex. Scoring will favor those tracts with larger playas, greater wetland acres, offers that contain the entire playa wetland, are over declining portions of the Ogallala Aquifer, and have lower bid offers.

Contract offers can be submitted through FSA at any time, and those offers will be ranked at intervals in a competitive bid process. Once a contract offer is accepted by FSA, land owners will work with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) regarding the technical assistance necessary to restore the contract area.



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planted in a normal manner to an agricultural commodity.

In addition, irrigated cropland must meet irrigation history requirements and must be physically and legally capable of being irrigated in a normal manner when offered for enrollment. Producers must also enter into a Water Use Contract with the State of Nebraska prior to enrollment in the Nebraska Platte-Republican Resources Area CREP.

Payments

Under the Nebraska Platte-Republican Resources Area CREP, eligible participants may receive the following payments:

- An annual rental payment consisting of:
 - A base soil rental rate, determined by (1) for irrigated cropland, the irrigated cropland rental rate for the applicable county; or (2) for non-irrigated cropland, the three predominant soils of the eligible land offered; and
 - A maintenance payment, determined by the practice.
- A one-time signing incentive payment (SIP) of \$100 per acre enrolled for installing practices CP21 and CP22; and \$150 per acre for installing practices CP23 and CP23A. Example: 10 acres enrolled to be devoted to practice CP21 result in a \$1,000 (10 acres x \$100) SIP. This payment is made after the contract has been signed and approved.
- A one-time practice incentive payment (PIP) for installing practices CP21, CP22, CP23 and CP23A. The PIP is equal to 40 percent of the total eligible cost of installing the practice. Example: Producer's total eligible reimbursable cost of installing the practice is \$2,000. The PIP would be \$800 (\$2,000 x .40).
- A cost-share payment of up to 50 percent of the eligible reimbursable cost to install the approved conservation practice.

In addition, the State of Nebraska provides cost-share payments for 50 percent of the eligible reimbursable cost to install the approved conservation practice.

Examples

A Morrill County producer elects to enroll 10 acres of irrigated cropland to be devoted to a filter strip (practice CP21) in a 15-year contract, and enters into a Water Use Contract with the state. The base soil rental rate for the land is \$155 per acre. The annual maintenance payment is \$10 per acre. The producer's annual rental rate will be \$165 per acre (\$155 + \$10) for a total

annual payment of \$1,650 (\$165 x 10 acres). The producer will receive \$24,750 in annual rental payments over the 15-year term of the CRP contract. In addition, the producer will receive a one-time SIP of \$1,000 (10 acres x \$100). The producer will receive cost-share payments equal to 50 percent of the eligible reimbursable costs to install the filter strip, plus a PIP equal to 40 percent of the cost of the eligible reimbursable costs to install the filter strip. In addition, the State of Nebraska will pay the producer cost-share payments equal to 50 percent of the eligible reimbursable costs to install the filter strip.

A Lincoln County producer elects to enroll 160 acres of irrigated cropland to be devoted to native grasses (practice CP2) in a 15-year contract, and enters into a Water Use Contract with the state. The base soil rental rate for the land is \$210 per acre. The producer's total annual payment is \$33,600 (\$210 x 160 acres). The producer will receive \$504,000 in annual rental payments over the 15-year term of the CRP contract. The producer will receive cost-share payments equal to 50 percent of the eligible reimbursable costs to install the native grasses. In addition, the State of Nebraska will pay the producer cost-share payments equal to 50 percent of the eligible reimbursable costs to install the native grasses.

Note: The preceding are examples only.

Enrollment Options/ Haying and Grazing

CREP is another option under CRP that farmers may select to enhance their land. Eligible producers may still enroll in CRP through general or continuous sign-up; however, the Nebraska Platte-Republican Resources Area CREP provides additional benefits not available through general and/or continuous sign-up. Under the Nebraska Platte-Republican Resources Area CREP, producers receive higher annual rental payments and longer contract lengths that increase the total amount of payments received. Haying and grazing are not allowed during the CRP contract period unless authorized by USDA. Contact your local FSA office for more information about authorized haying and grazing activities.

For More Information

For more information about FSA and its programs, visit [fsa.usda.gov](https://www.fsa.usda.gov) or contact your local FSA office. To find your local FSA office, visit [farmers.gov/service-center-locator](https://www.farmers.gov/service-center-locator).