



Washington Fact Sheet

State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE)
Columbia Basin Irrigation Project

Revised - May 2017

Overview

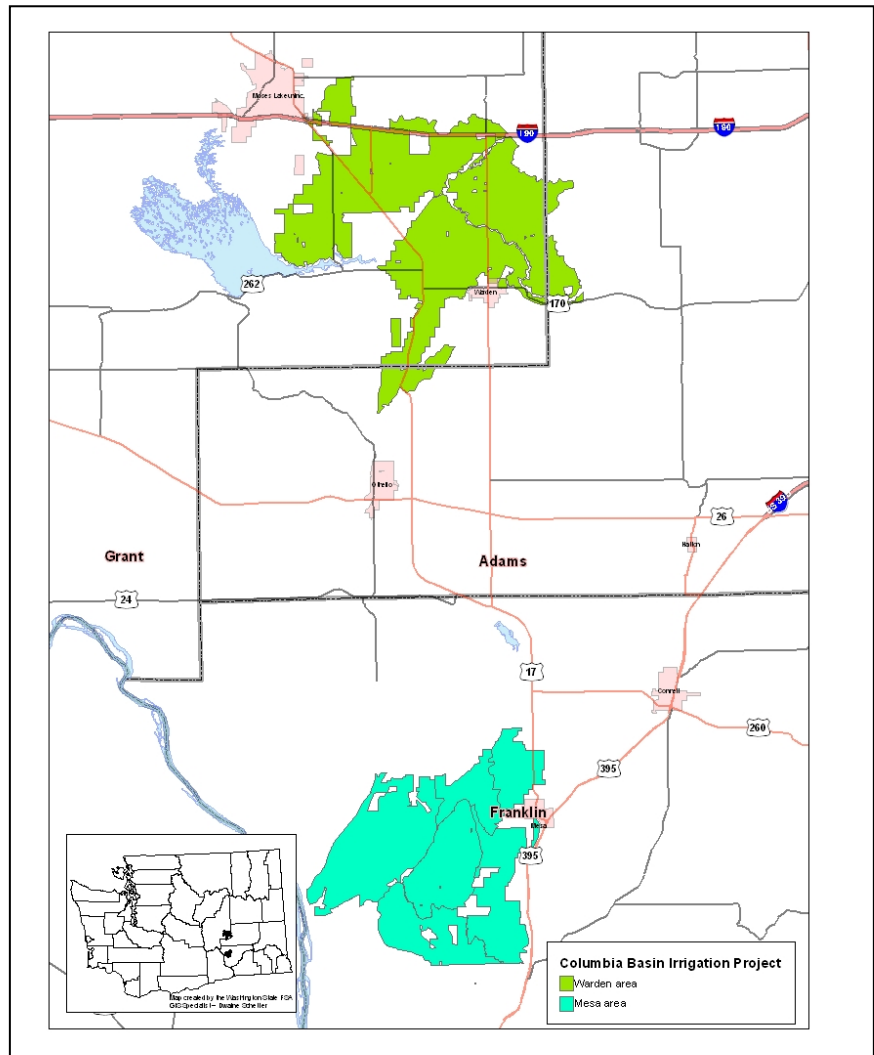
The Columbia Basin Irrigation Project State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) is a special initiative of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Like traditional CRP, SAFE is a voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to eligible land owners and operators to address priority natural resource concerns. SAFE, however, gives special consideration to wildlife. The initiative is a state and federal partnership between the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

The goal of the Washington Columbia Basin SAFE project is to enroll 500 acres to benefit ringnecked pheasant and California quail. In addition, the project will benefit at-risk species such as the burrowing owl and Washington ground squirrel, which are known to inhabit irrigated circle corners and other unfarmed areas.

Cooperating landowners receive rental payments, establishment and maintenance cost-share and incentive payments in return for entering a contract to provide specific wildlife habitat.

Land Eligibility

The Columbia Basin SAFE is one of five projects approved for Washington state. Land with a cropping history and within the project areas is eligible for SAFE enrollment. Land must have been cropped at least four years between 2008 and 2013



Columbia Basin Irrigation Project SAFE Area

to have a cropping history. Summer fallow, CRP and rotational crops are considered cropped. The primary unit of SAFE eligible land will be irrigation circle corners and other odd shaped, difficult to farm areas.

The project area includes portions of Grant, Adams, and

Franklin counties in eastern Washington. Land must be within the designated SAFE eligible portions of Irrigation Blocks 12, 13, 14, 16, 18, 19, 42, 43, or 44.

Payments

Landowners who voluntarily agree to 10 to 15-year contracts

will receive the following payments:

- Signing Incentive Payment – a one-time payment of \$75 per acre for land not previously enrolled in CRP
- Practice Incentive - 90 percent cost-share to install conservation practices
- Annual rental payment - based on the weighted average soil rental rate for the soils in the offered acreage.

SAFE contracts begin the first of the month following FSA approval of the contract. For example, a contract approved June 15 will become effective and annual rental payments will begin to accrue on July 1.

Payment Limitation

Annual rental payments, including the incentives, are subject to a payment limitation of \$50,000 per person, per year. The limit applies collectively to all CRP contracts the producer has throughout the U.S. Cost-share payments are not limited.

Contract Requirements

Landowners entering into a SAFE contract are required to plant specific wildlife seed mixes for food and cover. Weed control is required on SAFE acreage. A list of seed mixes is available from FSA or WDFW.

Approved conservation practices include establishment of native grass with either a:

- Minimum of 6 total species: 3 grasses and 3 forbs from approved species list. Select those best suited to the site and for area wildlife.
- Minimum of 7 total species: 3 grasses, 3 forbs, and 1 shrub and/or trees. Non-irrigated sites will require sagebrush. Shrubs and

trees may be chosen from an approved plant list for irrigated plots.

Willing operators will be allowed to voluntarily establish shrub and conifer plots with FSA cost-share only for plant materials and not for irrigation equipment. Operators will agree to maintain irrigated shrubs/trees as part of their CRP contract.

The establishment of grasses, forbs, shrubs and trees in cropland will require multiple year plantings. Native vegetation takes several growing seasons to establish, with the potential of invasion by non-native weedy species, making staged plantings more successful. Ten-year contracts allow 3-year staging; 15-year contracts allow 4-year staging before certifying a contract for establishment.

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service will provide technical assistance to develop a conservation plan.

The SAFE contract will be approved after all required documents are completed and signed, including:

- SAFE worksheet
- SAFE contract
- Conservation plan
- Landlord/tenant certification
- Payment limitation forms
- Conservation compliance form
- FSA acreage measurement (a small fee applies).

Access

Hunting and other public access to land enrolled in the SAFE program will be at the landowner's discretion.

Sign-Up Process

Landowners wishing to

participate in the SAFE program may apply at their local FSA office. Applications are accepted year-round. It is a non-competitive sign-up process, unlike regular CRP. After an application is submitted, a no-obligation eligibility review will be conducted and landowners are provided a final opportunity to decide whether to enroll land in the program.

Additional Information

For more information about SAFE, contact your local USDA Service Center or Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) biologist. Also, visit the FSA website at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/wa> or the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/>.

Grant and Adams counties

John Cotton, WDFW
(509) 754-4624 ext. 35.

Franklin County

Ryan Stutzman, WDFW
509 786-1923.

This fact sheet is a summary of the State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) program and is not intended to cover all situations or program provisions.