



Washington Fact Sheet

State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) Eastern Washington Shrub-Steppe

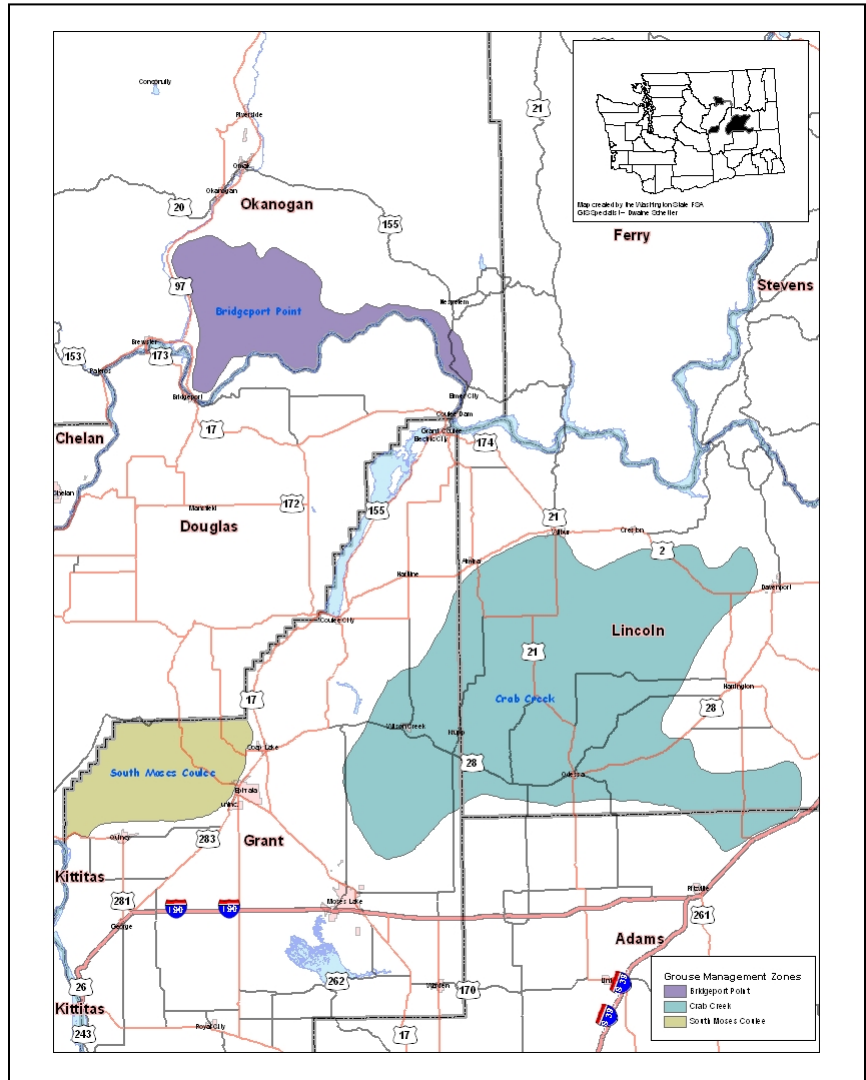
Updated – May 2017

Overview

The Shrub-Steppe 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), the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) and the Colville Confederated Tribes.

The goal of the Eastern Washington Shrub-Steppe SAFE is to enroll 25,400 acres to benefit shrub-steppe bird species that have declined because of ongoing habitat loss and fragmentation throughout the West.

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



Eastern Washington Shrub-Steppe Project SAFE Area

Land Eligibility

The Eastern Washington Shrub-Steppe 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 - 2013 to have a cropping history. Summer fallow, CRP and rotational crops are considered cropped.

within one-half mile of an existing remnant shrub-steppe habitat block of five acres or more in size and must be located in Adams, Lincoln, Grant or Okanogan counties.

The project area includes land

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, if a contract is approved June 15, it 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. There is no limit on the cost-share payments.

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 permanent native grasses – minimum 7 total species: 3 grasses, 3 forbs (1 may be introduced), and big sagebrush (by seed only, no plugs).
- Riparian buffers –Select woody vegetation species from approved species list.

The establishment of native grasses, forbs, and shrubs in cropland will require multiple year plantings. Native vegetation takes several growing seasons to establish. The potential of invasion by non-native weedy species makes staged plantings much more successful. A planting and maintenance schedule will be developed as part of a conservation plan.

Technical assistance to develop a conservation plan will be provided by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

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 Farm Service Agency 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 or the Colville Confederated Tribes Fish and Wildlife biologist. Also, visit the FSA website at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/wa> or the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/>.

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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.