



FACT SHEET



United States Department of Agriculture – Farm Service Agency

March 2010

Ohio State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) – CRP Practice CP38-4D Permanent Wildlife Habitat (Non-Easement) to Benefit Pheasants

Overview

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) in Ohio is aimed at creating specialized habitat to address one of the highest priority wildlife objectives in the State, maintaining and increasing populations of priority game bird species. This will be accomplished by specifically targeting declining pheasant populations in areas of greatest impact. Ohio Pheasant SAFE seeks to enroll up to 5,600 acres in CRP Practice CP38-4D for 10-15 years to:

- at a minimum, retain existing or restore high-quality grassland habitat in counties where known populations of pheasants currently reside, through re-enrollment of expiring CRP acres; and
- increase prime grassland habitat to promote pheasant and other grassland bird population increases through enrollment of cropland into permanent wildlife habitat.

Ohio's Pheasant SAFE is a State-led effort, mostly the result of Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) and Pheasants Forever (PF) along with other public and private organizations such as Farm Service Agency (FSA), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and Environmental Defense Fund (EDF). Ohio is targeting the Pheasant SAFE CP38 practice in areas, where left untreated, could result in even further decline of grassland birds of economic significance. SAFE has economic and programmatic benefits for landowners including enhanced economic incentives, and the opportunity to enroll whole fields.

Goals

The goal of Ohio Pheasant SAFE is to maintain and establish wildlife areas for the enhancement of habitat objectives for the benefit of declining grassland bird species, especially game birds like pheasants and quail. Pheasant SAFE also meets the national goals and objectives of SAFE by restoring habitat for species that have suffered a significant population decline. This project is expected to benefit many other important game species including Mourning Dove, Eastern Cottontail Rabbits, and many migratory waterfowl like Pintails, Canvasbacks, and Black Ducks. Priority non-game species, such as Henslow's Sparrow, Grasshopper Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Northern Harrier, Short-eared Owl, Bobolink, Dickcissel, Upland Sandpiper, and Eastern Plains Garter Snake will also benefit.

The Ohio Pheasant SAFE project seeks to enroll 5,600 acres of eligible land in certain counties where ODNR monitoring has determined populations of pheasants with the potential to benefit from this project. Additionally, extensive habitat decline is expected from CRP practice expirations and urbanization over the next few years in these targeted counties. Without such a program, current pheasant populations would continue to decline, with no chance of increasing their numbers.

Eligibility

Because the SAFE initiative is limited to 11,600 acres in Ohio, enrollment in Pheasant SAFE is limited to 5,600 acres to retain adequate acres for Ohio's other SAFE project, which focuses on revitalizing Ohio's grassland and wetland habitats. Pheasant SAFE consists of only one CRP practice, CP38E-4D, Permanent Wildlife Habitat, Non-easement. Pheasant SAFE may be enrolled in only the following counties in Ohio: Champaign, Defiance, Fayette, Hardin, Highland (partial), Logan, Marion (partial), Pickaway, Ross (partial), Seneca, Union, and Wyandot (partial). Pheasant SAFE practice may not be established in townships of those counties encumbered by another SAFE project in Ohio (see Figure 1). This SAFE project area does not overlap with other SAFE project areas.

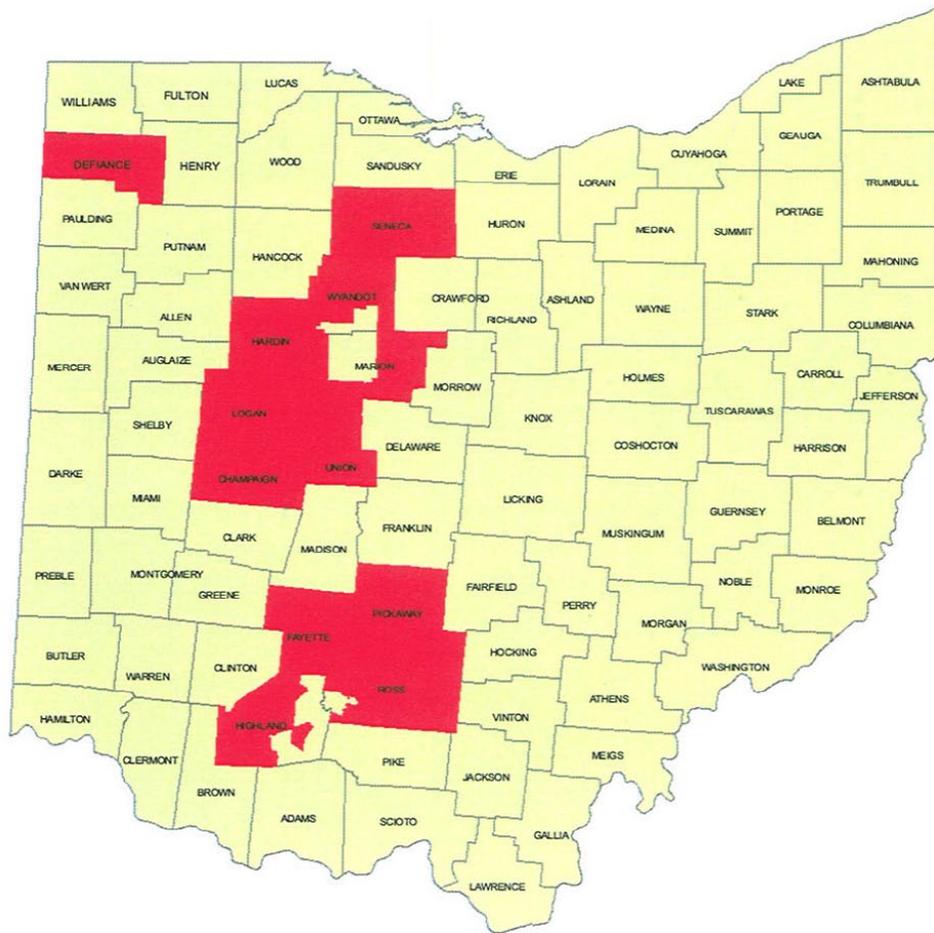


Figure 1: Ohio Counties or Partial Counties (red areas) in which CP38 Ohio Pheasant SAFE may be applied.

Cropland must be legally and physically capable of producing a crop in a normal manner and must be owned for at least one year prior to submitting an offer. Eligible land is required to have a certain cropping history. The contract period will be 10-15 years and signup will be on a first come, first served continuous basis until the acreage allocation is reached.

Practice covers must be established to specific species of grasses and forbs as outlined in the Conservation Plan of Operations. Certain management activities may be required to be performed before the last three years of the contract.

Participants shall allow access to their land by Federal, State, or private wildlife officials to monitor the success of the practice in achieving the goals of SAFE.

Payments and Other Assistance

Subject to contract terms and certain limitations, SAFE participants will be eligible for the following types of FSA payments:

- Signing Incentive Payment (SIP) - A one-time payment of \$100 per acre for land enrolled in approved SAFE practices. This payment is made immediately after CRP-1 contract approval.
- Practice Incentive Payment (PIP) - A one-time payment equal to 40% of the eligible reimbursable cost of establishing the approved conservation practice cover.
- Cost share assistance - Cost share is equal to 50% of the eligible cost of establishing the approved practice cover.
- Annual Rental Payment - based on the three predominant cropland soils determined rental rate per acre.
- Cost share assistance for Mid-Contract Management (MCM) activities – Cost share is equal to 50% of the eligible cost of carrying out up to 2 periods of MCM practices on CP38 practices at least 12 years in length and one MCM activity period on contracts less than 12 years in length. MCM activities may include light disking, controlled burning, interseeding forbs/grasses/legumes, chemical application, and prescribed mowing. Cost share under MCM is limited to \$50 per acre per year not to exceed \$100 per acre per 10-year contract and \$125 per acre for contracts in excess of 10 years.

Technical assistance will be provided by Federal, State, and private professionals to help participants select proper seed species, locate practice area, and establish and manage the practice cover.

Other SAFE Benefits

SAFE:

- Provides a unique opportunity for landowners and producers, within the targeted areas, to enroll whole field acres outside the floodplain in CRP under a continuous signup; and
- Will complement and fill the void left by Continuous CRP or CREP (in those areas where CREP is also available).

Other SAFE Information

CP38 practice is for those participants with a strong desire to restore or increase wildlife habitat for species that have suffered a significant decline in population. Participants must be willing to allow monitoring, must properly maintain the practice cover for the entire length of the contract, and perform periodic management activities to enhance the practice cover for wildlife.

Participants whose SAFE contracts are terminated (either voluntarily or because of violations) before the end of its term, because of loss of control of land or other reasons, must refund all payments received under their contract plus interest and liquidated damages. SAFE contract acres terminated because of contract violations may not restore crop bases such as DCP. To obtain maximum benefits from CP38, the practice cover must be retained for the entire length of the agreed-to contract period.

More information on the Ohio SAFE program is available at a local FSA office within the priority focus areas of practice CP38 or on Ohio FSA's website at:

<http://www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/oh>.

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