



USDA announces up to \$1 billion in funding for wildlife conservation over 15 years

What is State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE)?

This is a great opportunity for your organization to meet its objectives through the proven Federal Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). This is a first-time ever opportunity for state, local government and non-profits to submit proposals to the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) to address habitat restoration and enhancement needs for high priority wildlife through the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Species that could thrive on restored cropland – native bees, butterflies, grassland birds, wetland wildlife, and many, many more animal and plant communities that are identified as at risk in State Wildlife Action Plans -- could benefit.

Applicants with successful proposals do not receive a check from USDA, but rather USDA sets aside a specific number of acres for them. Habitat restoration funding on those acres will be determined when land is enrolled and has a property-specific conservation plan. While funding is not available for staff or project monitoring, it funds the habitat improvement and restoration – and landowner payments – that are essential to many conservation projects working to protect rare wildlife habitat.

Does this differ from a Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)?

Yes. There is no state cash match required, and proposals will be developed and funded within months.

What CRP Practices are available under the SAFE?

CRP SAFE has 5 practice subcategories (A-E) with allocated conservation practices:

A. 38A Buffers

- [CP8A Grass Waterways](#), [CP21 Filter Strips](#) & [CP22 Riparian Buffers](#)

B 38B Wetlands

- [CP9 Shallow Water Areas for Wildlife](#)
- [CP23 Wetland Restoration](#) & [CP23A Nonfloodplain Wetland Restoration](#)
- [CP27 Farmable Wetlands](#) & [CP28 Farmable Wetlands Buffers](#)

C 38C Trees

- [CP3 Tree Planting](#) & [CP3A Hardwood Tree Planting](#)
- [CP16A Shelterbelt Establishment](#) & [CP17A Living Snow Fences](#)
- CP25 Rare and Declining Habitat: [Savanna](#); [Prairies](#); [Wet Prairies](#)
- [CP31 Bottomland Timber Establishment on Wetlands](#)

D 38D-Longleaf Pine (not available in Michigan)

- [CP3A Hardwood Tree Planting](#) , CP36 Longleaf Pine

E 38E Grass

- [CP1 Permanent Introduced Grasses](#), [CP2 Permanent Native Grasses](#),
- [CP4B Wildlife Corridors](#), [CP4D Wildlife Habitat](#), [CP10 Established Grass](#)
- [CP12 Wildlife Food Plot](#), CP15 Contour Grass Strips,
- CP18B&C Salt Tolerant Vegetation, CP24 Cross Wind Trap Strips, CP25 Rare & Declining Habitat: [Savanna](#); [Prairies](#); [Wet Prairies](#)
- [CP33 Habitat Buffers for Upland Birds](#)

These current CRP practices can be fine tuned under SAFE to improve, connect or create higher quality habitat that promotes healthier ecosystems in areas identified as essential to effective target species management.

What would USDA pay for?

Payments for land management and restoration:

- Up to 90% cost share – the cost to prepare habitat and plant vegetation for wildlife.
- 50% cost share for management, such as prescribed burns, that is required to maintain the vegetation for wildlife during the 10-15 year contract.
- Whole fields can be enrolled as well as stream and wetland buffers.
- Annual maintenance payment to offset periodic maintenance activities.

Payments to the farmer's pocket:

- Annual rental payments based on average rental rates for the 3 predominant soils on the cropland being enrolled for the length of the CRP contract (10-15 years). Currently, in Michigan, the average rental rate is \$77/ac. An ongoing review of rental rates will result in an increase in the average by mid-summer.
- An additional \$100/acre upfront incentive payment.

The CRP SAFE does not provide payments for reporting or monitoring, but will support technical assistance to help farmers plan and implement work that state agencies and private organizations may qualify for.

Can be combined with other funding and programs, for example to: cover the remaining 10% of restoration costs; provide additional habitat restoration dollars beyond USDA's limits; offer additional money to turn a temporary contract into a permanent easement, offer additional payments to encourage landowner participation; or any other combinations that would enhance the success of the wildlife conservation effort or but not duplicate payment for the same services.

What land is eligible?

Eligible lands are working lands that were in crop production 4 out of the 6 years between 1996 and 2002.

What types of wildlife and plantings are eligible?

Threatened and endangered species, at risk species, and other priority wildlife identified in State Wildlife Action Plans and other plans, as well as game species are eligible.

What are the state, local, NGO and federal roles?

USDA will be responsible for doing the paperwork to enroll farmers in contracts and for making payments to farmers. State, local, or NGO partners are responsible for finding landowners interested in participating, working with USDA to develop a conservation plan, monitoring habitat restoration or enhancement activities and compiling an annual performance report.

When do proposals have to be submitted?

Michigan CRP SAFE proposals are due by close of business on **Tuesday, July 31, 2007**. This timeframe will allow selected proposals to be submitted to USDA in Washington, DC by November 1, 2007. USDA will likely view proposals with multiple partners as having a better chance of success at achieving their conservation goals.

Completed CRP SAFE proposals need to be sent to the following address by the date and time mentioned above:

**Michigan State FSA Office
ATTN: Dale Allen
3001 Coolidge Road
East Lansing, MI 48823**

Specific CRP SAFE questions should be directed to Dale Allen at (517) 324-5105 or through e-mail at dale.allen@mi.usda.gov.

How will the approval process work?

All proposals need to be submitted to the Michigan USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) state office by **Tuesday, July 31, 2007**. In August a diverse review group will identify which proposals they support to be submitted to the Michigan Technical Committee and the Michigan State FSA Committee. Proposals and state recommendations are then sent to Washington, DC for final approval. Funded proposals may begin enrolling farmers as early as January 2008.

What should a proposal include?

More information about what should be included in your proposal is available on at www.fsa.usda.gov/mi.

However, we emphasize that proposals should:

- Be short, 5-10 pages.
- Include a specific goal based on the number of acres that will be enrolled over 5 years.
- Include a GIS shape file map that shows the counties, watersheds, or other regions that are targeted for farmland enrollment, and land uses and habitat types.
- Describe what will be done on enrolled acres by listing the USDA 'conservation practices' that will be used to restore habitat and if they need to be modified, describe those modifications and scientific basis for making them. Existing practices cover most habitats and activities already and are described on USDA's website.

- Describe the management needed to maintain habitat on properties during the 10-15 year enrollment period and how frequently it will need to occur.
- Include a detailed plan developed by wildlife experts to monitor the benefits the project will produce for the targeted species and how those benefits will be quantitatively measured over the 15-year lifespan of the project.
- A one page budget that estimates the USDA cost for each of its different payment types, and other in-kind and cash contributions by partners and landowners over 10-15 years.

