

SAFE

State Acres For Wildlife

Overview and Goal

The State Acres For Wildlife program (SAFE) is a voluntary program that provides assistance to farmers who wish to establish and maintain upland wildlife habitat on acres that are currently or have been in row crop production. The Mercer County SWCD, in conjunction with the NRCS and FSA will provide assistance to local producers who wish to participate.

The goal of the SAFE program is to restore pheasant and other upland game habitat on 500 acres of land that contains prairie or transitional soils but has been converted to crop production.

Benefits

Through the collaborative efforts of producers, USDA, and the local SWCD, erosion will be reduced, wildlife habitat and water quality will be enhanced, and essential habitat for pheasant will be restored on up to 500 acres.

How SAFE Works

SAFE is an extension of the already popular Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Most of the same rules and eligibility criteria apply to SAFE that apply to the CRP program. In exchange for agreeing to convert cropland to habitat, you will be paid a rental rate for up to 15 years on the contracted acreages. Currently, Mercer County's average rental rate is \$142.00 per acre. The rental rate calculated is based upon the soil types present in the application area.

Interested landowners will be required to establish approved seeding mixtures on the SAFE and agree to maintain them for the life of the contract, whether it be for 10 or 15 years. No acreage is considered to be too large or too small to be eligible.

Any time after January 1, 2008, interested landowners will need to contact the Mercer County SWCD at 309-582-5153, extension 3 to schedule an appointment to discuss the program, its benefits, and eligibility criteria. The SWCD, FSA, and NRCS staff will determine eligibility, calculate rental rates, establishment costs, develop a conservation plan and a wildlife habitat management plan for you to review.