

Kentucky State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE)**Overview**

Kentucky land owners and operators of certain cropland in designated geographic areas may enroll eligible land in a new continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) conservation practice titled State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE), also known as CP38. USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) will conduct sign-up for SAFE on a continuous (ongoing) basis beginning May 5, 2008, in all or portions of the following counties:

Allen, Ballard, Barren, Breckinridge, Bullitt, Butler, Caldwell, Calloway, Carlisle, Christian, Crittenden, Daviess, Edmonson, Fulton, Graves, Grayson, Green, Hancock, Hardin, Hart, Henderson, Hickman, Hopkins, LaRue, Livingston, Logan, Lyon, Marion, Marshall, McCracken, McLean, Meade, Metcalfe, Monroe, Muhlenberg, Nelson, Ohio, Simpson, Taylor, Todd, Trigg, Union, Warren, and Webster.

Benefits

Project benefits will include the following:

- Help abate the decline of grassland birds and other grassland species
- Provide habitat that will benefit pollinator species
- Reduce soil erosion and sedimentation, improve

water quality, improve wetland functions, and sequester carbon

- Help to protect and increase the presence of native grasslands, barrens and glades.
- Increase rural economic and recreational opportunities through bird watching and hunting by providing a greater diversity of habitats that will attract a greater diversity of wildlife
- Provide larger blocks of intact habitat within a landscape that is highly fragmented
- Provide economic incentives to landowners to plant critical habitat for wildlife.

Goals

The Kentucky SAFE project goals include:

- Enrollment of 8,600 acres of conservation practices in the targeted area
- Restoration of Habitat for endangered, threatened and declining wildlife species
- Reduction of soil erosion and sedimentation, improve water quality, improve wetland functions, and sequester carbon
- Increase nutrient filtering capabilities and soil stabilization on cultivated lands

- Observed increase in a suite of selected grassland songbird singing males and calling bobwhite males and bobwhite coveys
- Establish grasslands that will provide diverse nesting and brood rearing habitat for various bird species
- To observe an increase in the relative abundance of relict darters, swamp darters, cypress minnows, dollar sunfish, and Indiana bats within the Obion Creek and Bayou de Chien watershed.

Enrollment

Offers for enrollment in SAFE practices are accepted on a continuous CRP basis. Offers are automatically accepted provided the land and producer meet certain eligibility requirements. Offers for continuous sign-up are not subject to competitive bidding. Continuous sign-up contracts are 10 to 15 years in duration.

Eligibility Requirements

Land eligibility requirements that must be met for enrollment in Kentucky SAFE Practices include:

- Land must be cropland (including field margins) that was planted or considered planted to an agricultural commodity 4

of 6 crop years from 1996 to 2001, and the land must currently be physically and legally capable of being planted in a normal manner to an agricultural commodity; and

- Land must be located within the designated 12 digit Hydrologic Unit Codes for the project.

Eligible Producers

To be eligible to offer land for SAFE a producer must have owned or operated the land for at least 12 months prior to submitting the offer, unless:

- The new owner acquired the land due to the previous owner's death;
- The ownership change occurred due to foreclosure where the owner exercised a timely right or redemption in accordance with state law; or
- The circumstances of the acquisition present adequate assurance to FSA that the new owner did not acquire the land for the purpose of placing it in CRP.

Approved Conservation Practices

Two specific practices will be utilized on a continuous sign up basis to accomplish the goals and purposes of Kentucky SAFE.

Bottomland Hardwood Restoration (CP38C) will offer the opportunity for participants in the Obion Creek and Bayou de Chien watershed to restore

bottomland hardwood. There are 87 total species listed in and around the focus area (29 endangered, 31 threatened, and 27 species of special concern). Implementation of this practice may significantly reduce sediment by controlling erosion. The practice will also serve to improve water quality, improve wetland functions and restore and connect habitat for the endangered, threatened, and declining species. 2,800 acres have been designated to this practice.

Early Successional Habitat (CP38E) will be used to restore grassland habitat for nesting grassland songbirds whose populations are at-risk and have suffered significant declines throughout the state. The benefits of this practice will include the increase and vitality of various bird species including grassland songbirds and bobwhite quail. The combination of techniques and diverse grassland establishments will provide nesting and brood rearing habitat to increase the populations of bird populations as well as pollinator species. 5,800 acres have been designated for this practice.

SAFE Payments

FSA provides SAFE participants with rental payments, including any incentives, and cost-share assistance:

- Rental Payments

In return for establishing long-term, resource-conserving covers, FSA provides annual rental payments to participants. FSA bases rental rates on the relative productivity of the soils within each county and the average dry land cash rent or cash rent equivalent. The maximum CRP rental rate for each offer is calculated in advance of enrollment.

The per-acre annual rental rate may not exceed FSA's maximum payment amount and is calculated in advance of enrollment.

- Cost-share Assistance

FSA provides cost-share assistance to participants who establish approved cover on eligible cropland. The cost-share assistance can be no more than 100 percent of the participant's cost to establish approved practices. Cost-share is calculated at 50 percent of an established average rate for installing the practice.

- Financial Incentives

Also as a part of annual rental payments, FSA offers participants the following payment enhancements for SAFE practices:

- An up front signing incentive payment (CRP-SIP) up to \$100 per eligible acre for participants who enroll certain practices. The one-time SIP will be made after the contract is approved and all payment eligibility criteria are met; and

- A practice incentive payment (CRP-PIP) equal to 40 percent of the eligible installation costs for eligible participants who enroll certain practices. The one-time PIP will be issued after the practice is installed, eligible costs are verified, and other payment eligibility criteria are met.

For More Information

For more information on Kentucky SAFE sign-up, contact your local FSA office or visit FSA's Web site at: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/>

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