



State Acres For wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) Approved Projects

Overview

On Jan. 19, 2008, Acting Agriculture Secretary Chuck Conner announced the first projects to be approved under the new continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) conservation practice titled State Acres For wildlife Enhancement (SAFE), also known as CP38. Acting Secretary Conner announced 45 projects, covering more than 250,000 acres, which benefit a wide variety of species that are endangered, threatened or high priority (species of concern). This fact sheet provides a brief summary of each project.

The United States Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency (FSA) approved SAFE proposals to address state and regional high-priority wildlife objectives. SAFE practices provide the flexibility to meet the specific needs of high-value wildlife species in a participating state or region. Conservation practices currently offered under CRP are fine-tuned through SAFE to improve, connect or create higher-quality habitat to promote healthier ecosystems in areas identified as essential to effective management of high-priority species. SAFE, like other continuous CRP practices, targets CRP acres to the most environmentally sensitive land and estab-

lishes the highest value conservation practices on generally smaller acreages. General sign-up CRP acreage, on the other hand, often enrolls whole fields and farms. USDA's national goal is to restore or enhance 500,000 acres of wildlife habitat through SAFE. FSA announced SAFE in March 2007.

FSA state and/or local offices will announce sign-up for SAFE in the near future and conduct sign-up on a continuous (ongoing) basis. Through continuous CRP sign-up, USDA accepts year-round producer offers, provided the land and producer meet certain eligibility requirements. Producers can offer land for enrollment in SAFE and other CRP programs at their local FSA service center.

Producers within a SAFE area can submit offers to voluntarily enroll acres in CRP contracts for 10-15 years (the contract length depends on the SAFE proposal authorized for the area). In exchange, producers receive annual CRP rental payments, incentives and cost-share assistance to establish habitat-enhancing natural covers on eligible land. Producers enrolling in CRP enter into contracts with USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC). FSA administers CRP on behalf of CCC.

Colorado

Colorado Lesser Prairie Chicken SAFE

The goal of the Colorado Lesser Prairie Chicken SAFE is to restore and enhance 2,900 acres of short and midgrass sand sagebrush prairie to maintain and enhance lesser prairie chicken populations in Colorado. This project seeks to enroll lesser prairie chicken habitat in CRP in two years and to begin active management of the restored acres in year four. The lesser prairie chicken is an upland grassland nesting bird requiring large tracts of non-fragmented habitat. It is a year-round resident of short and midgrass sand sagebrush prairie in southeastern Colorado primarily in portions of Baca, Prowers, Kiowa and Cheyenne counties.

Colorado Plains Sharp-tailed Grouse SAFE

The goal of the Colorado Plains Sharp-tailed Grouse SAFE is to improve nesting and brood rearing cover for plains sharp-tailed grouse (PSTG) populations in northern Colorado through the re-enrollment and enhancement of existing CRP fields that serve as critical habitat for the bird's population in the state. The program seeks to enroll up to 1,463 acres of existing grassland habitat in CRP within three years of project implementation. The state recov-

ery plan for PSTG indicates that the “overriding factor affecting populations in Colorado is habitat loss due to grassland conversion to housing developments and, to a lesser extent, conversion to agriculture. Heavy grazing reduces cover used for nesting. Residual cover is especially critical, given the early nesting season.” The effect of these grassland-fragmenting trends has been mitigated to some extent by the retirement of cropland into CRP.

Colorado Shortgrass Prairie SAFE

The goal of the Colorado Shortgrass Prairie SAFE is to preserve the integrity of and expand the extent of shortgrass prairie reserves managed for wildlife species in eastern Colorado. Project partners hope to accomplish this by enrolling 1,463 acres in CRP. This will be done through the establishment and management of restored tracts of critical shortgrass prairie habitats adjacent to existing protected grasslands in eastern Colorado counties. The program seeks to provide habitat for numerous wildlife species dependant upon large tracts of intact grassland ecosystems. Measurable outcomes for the project include: establishment of 1,463 acres of viable native grass stands similar in composition to Historic Climax Plant Communities within five years of program implementation; development of management plans for the 1,463 acres of enrolled tracts such that landscape-level grassland ecosystem functions are enhanced and maintained; and increase

grassland bird abundance and species diversity in regions where the practice is implemented.

Colorado Western Slope Grouse SAFE

The goal of the Colorado Western Slope Grouse SAFE is to restore and enhance habitat for the Colorado state species of concern: Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, greater sage grouse and Gunnison sage-grouse. This project targets the conversion of cropland to suitable grass, forb and shrub species and the enhancement and maintenance of expired CRP land to support and benefit at-risk grouse species. The program seeks to enroll 5,850 acres in CRP. Measurable outcomes of this project include the enrollment of new cropland and expired CRP into the SAFE project.

Georgia

Georgia Restoring Native Pine Savanna SAFE

The goal of the Georgia Restoring Native Pine Savanna SAFE is to establish and maintain 4,800 acres of pine savanna habitat for northern bobwhite and other species that depend on native groundcover (grass/forb/shrub) and are in decline. The project seeks to enroll 4,800 acres in CRP. Open canopy pine forests with diverse native groundcover characterize this habitat type. Periodic prescribed burning coupled with pine forest thinning mimics the natural ecosystem processes of this landscape to create and maintain pine savanna habitat. Without thinning, tree

canopies close and shade-out ground cover. Without periodic prescribed burning, fire-intolerant plant species invade and out-compete natural early successional plants.

Idaho

Idaho Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse SAFE

The goal of the Idaho Columbian Sharp-tailed Grouse SAFE is to enroll 3,100 acres in CRP to increase quality grassland, shrub steppe, mountain brush and riparian habitat for the Columbian sharp-tailed grouse. The project seeks to establish, improve or maintain shrubs, grasses, forbs and legumes on cropland within 1.2 miles of active Columbian sharp-tailed grouse leks. This SAFE effort will also establish or improve Columbian sharp-tailed grouse nesting, brood-rearing and winter habitat by creating shrub/tree thickets within four miles of sharp-tailed grouse leks. Other wildlife, such as muledeer and upland game birds, will benefit from the increased diverse habitats.

Illinois

Illinois Mercer County SAFE

The goal of the Illinois Mercer County Pheasant SAFE is to increase pheasant habitat within the county by 500 acres over a five-year period by enrolling land in CRP. The project emphasizes the establishment of permanent native grasses and forbs that will also benefit other species of upland wildlife. Through the establishment and proper manage-

ment of native grasses and forbs, pheasant populations throughout the county are projected to increase steadily over the five-year period. Once the proper habitat has become fully established, pheasant populations in Mercer County will benefit from added brood-rearing and nesting habitat.

Illinois Prairie Habitat SAFE

The goal of the Illinois Prairie Habitat SAFE is to restore grassland and wetland habitats in upland landscapes occupied by tallgrass prairie and herbaceous wetlands. Enrolling 20,600 acres in CRP will benefit the Massasauga rattlesnake and other wetland prairie species such as Kirkland's watersnake and the northern crawfish frog. The project is designed to increase the abundance of grassland wildlife including endangered, economically significant and declining species within highly focused project areas and increase opportunity for high quality, wildlife-based recreation. Other benefits include reduction of soil erosion and runoff of sediment, nutrients and pesticides from agricultural fields, improvement of soil quality, increased carbon sequestration and improved water quality.

Iowa**Iowa Early Successional/Neotropical Birds SAFE**

The goal of the Iowa Early Successional/Neotropical Birds SAFE practice is to enroll 3,500 acres in CRP to develop habitat required by numerous bird species that

are showing nationwide decline. Many species will benefit from this project including ruffed grouse, American woodcock, field sparrow, eastern towhees and indigo bunting. While some of the plant species will take decades to mature, an increase in the usage of the newly established habitat by the target species is predicted within the first two to three years.

Iowa Gaining Ground SAFE

The goal of the Iowa Gaining Ground SAFE is to increase populations of ring-necked pheasant, dickcissel, bobolink and eastern meadowlark by enrolling 19,700 acres in CRP. The project seeks to enhance native plant communities in buffers around and near existing remnants of native prairie. Enrollment will be targeted to within three miles of existing protected wildlife areas or where other plans have identified grassland/wetland habitats as priorities. This habitat also will benefit grassland/wetland mammals, reptiles, insects and amphibians. The project will improve water quality and reduce erosion.

Iowa Grand River SAFE

The goal of the Iowa Grand River SAFE is to restore native habitat for five grassland dependant bird species of greatest conservation need in the Kellerton Bird Conservation Area in southeast Ringgold County. This will be accomplished by enrolling 4,500 acres of cropland or other acreage in CRP to create higher quality native grasslands.

Maine**Maine New England Cottontail SAFE**

The goal of the Maine New England Cottontail SAFE project is to enroll 250 acres in CRP to restore New England cottontail (NEC) rabbit habitat in York and Cumberland counties in Maine. The historic range of the NEC is estimated to have shrunk by over 83 percent. The NEC is a candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, and is listed as endangered under the Maine Endangered Species Act. The loss of early successional forest, thicket and shrubland, especially dense deciduous and coniferous thickets less than 25 years of age, is believed to be the main reason for the rabbit's decline. Increasing habitat will make the rabbit less vulnerable to predation, disease or weather events. Additionally, increasing habitat will promote immigration and gene flow between rabbit populations. The project will also help bird species known to be in decline such as the blue-winged warbler, American woodcock, eastern towhee and golden-winged warbler.

Maine Upland Sandpiper SAFE

The goal of the Maine Upland Sandpiper SAFE project is to enroll 1,000 acres to develop and maintain nesting and brood-rearing habitat for at-risk grassland birds and restore or enhance grassland vegetation for upland sandpipers, bobolinks and meadowlarks. The combination of techniques used in this practice

should benefit pollinator species and other bird species of conservation concern such as eastern meadowlark and horned lark. Grassland bird populations such as savannah sparrows, grasshopper sparrows, upland sandpipers, bobolinks and eastern meadowlarks, have significantly declined in the Northeast over the last 30 years because of development, forest succession, certain agricultural practices and conversion of grasslands to row crops.

Michigan

Michigan Diverse Grassland SAFE

The Michigan Diverse Grassland SAFE seeks to enroll 7,500 acres of diverse native grassland within five years to benefit a variety of rare or declining species and species of significant importance. The project area is the lower peninsula of Michigan. This project works to plant native grasses, forbs and oak trees to create mosaics of short-grass prairie, tall-grass prairie and oak savanna. These and other species will benefit from SAFE: bobolink, eastern box turtle, eastern hognosed snake, eastern wild turkey, grasshopper sparrow, Henslow's sparrow, Karner Blue butterfly, northern bobwhite quail and ring-necked pheasant.

Michigan Native Pollinators SAFE

The goal of the Michigan Native Pollinators SAFE is to enroll 2,500 acres of practices over the next five years to benefit native pollina-

tors. These practices will consist of grasslands which provide diverse sources of nectar and pollen along with bare soil patches for ground nesting pollinators. Bees, butterflies and moths are among the pollinators that will benefit. The focus area includes 22 Michigan counties along Lake Michigan.

Minnesota

Minnesota Back Forty SAFE

The goal of the Minnesota Back Forty SAFE project is to enroll 23,100 acres to restore and enhance habitat for ring-necked pheasant populations. The project seeks to build upon existing habitats to enhance waterfowl, greater prairie chicken and grassland bird populations. The conservation effort is expected to benefit bird species such as Henslow's sparrow, lark sparrow, loggerhead shrike, eastern meadowlark, bobolink, dickcissel, vesper sparrow, savannah sparrow and grasshopper sparrow. Pheasants are an upland nesting bird preferring small blocks of undisturbed grassland nesting habitat. The pheasant is important both socially and economically. In 2006, nearly 130,000 Minnesotans purchased pheasant stamps, a license required to hunt pheasants in Minnesota. Pheasants are barometers of the environmental health of Minnesota's farmlands, as their populations ebb and flow with landowner participation in conservation. In addition to being the primary limiting factor for

pheasants, grasslands have been identified as among the nation's most threatened ecosystems. This threat is evident in Minnesota where less than 1 percent of native prairie remains.

Mississippi

Mississippi Black Bear SAFE

The goal of the Mississippi Black Bear SAFE project is to enroll 7,950 acres to increase habitat for the federally threatened Louisiana black bear and the state-endangered American black bear. The project seeks to restore native bottomland hardwood forests in portions of the Mississippi Alluvial Valley, which has been identified as an important zone for black bear recovery. The conservation practices will create local habitat conditions favorable to black bear by planting a mixture of species that will provide year-round foraging opportunities, escape cover and elevated den cavities. On a larger scale, this SAFE project will help form core habitat and corridors.

Mississippi Black Belt SAFE

The goal of the Mississippi Black Belt SAFE is to enroll 2,500 acres in CRP to increase native grassland habitats for rare, threatened, endangered and declining species in the Black Belt Prairie region of Mississippi. The project goal is to enroll the acreage within three years and complete vegetative restoration within two years of the contract approval date. By restoring quality native grassland habitats, project partners hope to

increase and improve habitat for grassland songbirds, pollinator insects and other terrestrial and aquatic wildlife. Project partners will implement bird and butterfly monitoring plans to measure responses to the conservation practices. The Black Belt Prairie is listed as one of the most critically endangered (98 percent decline) ecosystems in the nation with less than 1 percent of the prairie still remaining. It is the most degraded habitat type in Mississippi and Alabama.

Mississippi Bobwhite Quail SAFE

The goal of the Mississippi Bobwhite Quail SAFE is to enroll 2,950 acres to increase native grassland habitats in Mississippi for northern bobwhite quail populations within three years. By restoring quality native grassland habitat, the project cooperators hope to increase habitat for bobwhite quail, grassland songbirds, pollinator insects and other wildlife. Infrastructure is already in place to establish native grass and forb communities in Mississippi. To measure species response to the conservation practice, partners will monitor bird populations for at least three years after fields are enrolled. Because of the historical prominence of bobwhite quail as a game bird, project organizers will use the bobwhite as a flagship species to promote habitat management for grassland wildlife in general.

Montana

Montana Pheasant Winter Cover SAFE

The goal of the Montana Pheasant Winter Cover SAFE is to enroll 10,000 acres to provide blocks of grass or shrub cover for ring-necked pheasant and other upland birds near existing permanent winter cover. The project seeks to expand habitat for ring-necked pheasant and other upland birds by converting eligible croplands to grassy cover (grasses, legumes and forbs). The habitat will provide a variety of needs for ring-necked pheasant and other upland game birds such as nesting, brood-rearing, winter roosting and escape cover. The SAFE project boundaries include the Montana pheasant range in Richland, Dawson, Roosevelt, Valley and McCone counties.

Montana Prairie Pothole SAFE

The goal of the Montana Prairie Pothole SAFE is to enroll 7,700 acres to expand habitat for ducks, ring-necked pheasant, Hungarian (gray) partridge, native sharp-tailed grouse and neotropical birds by supplementing existing habitat by seeding herbaceous vegetation in areas of high wetland densities or that are adjacent to semi-permanent wetlands. Establishing blocks of undisturbed cover near wetland and riparian habitats will benefit numerous ground-nesting birds including Baird's sparrow and Sprague's pipit. Raptors, such as the northern harrier, will benefit from an

improved prey base. Mule deer, white-tailed deer, pronghorn and many small mammal species will also benefit from the cover and food base available in the seeded fields. The project area includes the Prairie Pothole area east of the Continental Divide and north of the Missouri River.

Montana Sagebrush SAFE

The goal of the Montana Sagebrush SAFE is to enroll 1,000 acres to restore cropland to sagebrush habitat suitable for a variety of wildlife, including sage grouse and other sagebrush obligate birds such as sage sparrow and sage thrasher. Other sagebrush-associated wildlife will benefit such as sharp-tailed grouse, grey partridge, mule deer, pronghorn antelope and small mammals. The restored habitat will provide critical nesting habitats for sage grouse breeding and brood-rearing seasons. It will provide important winter forage and fawning protection for large ungulates, escape cover for upland game birds and habitat for other small mammal and bird species.

Nebraska

Nebraska Tallgrass SAFE

The goal of the Nebraska Tallgrass SAFE is to enroll 11,450 acres to expand habitat in the Nebraska's tallgrass prairie region for greater prairie chickens. This project targets the conversion of cropland to suitable blocks of perennial herbaceous cover and the retention, and enhancement, of existing blocks of land enrolled

in CRP. The land will provide all habitat needs including nesting, brood rearing, winter roosting and escape cover for greater prairie chickens. The land will also benefit a variety of other upland game birds and grassland breeding songbirds. Diverse mixes of grasses and forbs will provide nesting for a variety of wildlife including game birds (ring-necked pheasants, wild turkeys) and non-game birds of conservation interest in Nebraska (Henslow's sparrow). Acres enrolled in SAFE will also improve water quality and reduce soil erosion.

Nebraska Upland Birds SAFE

The goal of the Nebraska Upland Birds SAFE is to enroll 11,450 acres to enhance habitat for upland wildlife such as upland game birds, including northern bobwhite quail and ring-necked pheasant. The project seeks the conversion of cropland areas to habitat. For nesting upland game birds and grassland songbirds, patches of habitat are preferred to strips or buffers. Patches of habitat and wider buffers (>100 feet wide) are preferred for nesting and have reduced predation as compared to narrow strips or buffers enrolled at minimum widths (30 feet or less). Additional wildlife benefits will be achieved by designing patches of habitat that incorporate multiple plantings (e.g. nesting cover, brood-rearing cover, winter cover), to better meet the year-round needs of wildlife within individual patches of cover. These small areas will also benefit grassland-breeding songbirds. Additionally, acres enrolled in the SAFE pro-

gram will improve water quality and reduce soil erosion. The project area is statewide.

North Carolina

North Carolina Grassland SAFE

The goal of the North Carolina Grassland SAFE is to enroll 5,600 acres devoted to early successional habitat to benefit several grassland bird species identified as high-priority. These species include northern bobwhite, loggerhead shrike, grasshopper sparrow, eastern kingbird, eastern meadowlark, common yellowthroat and field sparrow. Habitat restoration will occur in the northeastern portion of North Carolina's upper coastal plain. This area has been targeted as a focal point for grassland bird conservation efforts. Project partners expect development of this habitat will increase the number of targeted birds during the breeding season after the third year of establishment. Installed practices will improve soil and water conservation efforts in the area.

North Dakota

North Dakota Coteau-Drift SAFE

The goal of the North Dakota Coteau-Drift SAFE project is to enroll 20,000 acres in the Missouri Plateau and Drift Prairie region to maintain and increase habitat for priority species of waterfowl, water birds, shorebirds and terrestrial birds. The project will restore and enhance wetlands, and help a variety of mammals, amphib-

ians and reptiles. It will establish permanent native or introduced cover, reestablish or maintain existing CRP grassland habitat within two years of the contract approval date. Native cover will consist of grass and forbs known to be important cover and forage to the above-mentioned wildlife species.

North Dakota Sagebrush SAFE

The goal of the North Dakota Sagebrush SAFE is to enroll 1,000 acres to increase sage grouse populations by restoring cropland to sagebrush habitat. This ecosystem is suitable for sage grouse and other sagebrush birds such as sage sparrow, sage thrasher, sharp-tailed grouse, grey partridge and mule deer. The project will increase critical nesting habitats for sage grouse breeding and brood-rearing seasons. Pronghorn antelope and small mammals also will benefit. The land provides important winter forage and fawning protection for large ungulates and escape cover for upland game birds. One measurable goal of the project is to increase the number of sage grouse leks (courtship display areas).

North Dakota Tallgrass SAFE

The goal of the North Dakota Tallgrass SAFE is to enroll 6,000 acres to restore cropland to native tall-grass prairie habitat to maintain and increase greater prairie chicken and sharp-tailed grouse populations in the project area. The project area encompasses the critical habitat and current

distribution area of the two remaining greater prairie chicken populations in North Dakota. The project seeks to establish permanent native cover and re-establish or maintain existing CRP grassland habitat within two years of the contract approval date. Native cover will consist of grass and forb species known to be important cover and forage for the two bird species.

South Carolina

South Carolina Restoring Native Grasses SAFE

The goal of the South Carolina Restoring Native Grasses SAFE is to enroll 2,300 acres to increase early successional habitat in Allendale, Bamberg and Barnwell counties to benefit birds in decline. The project seeks to increase habitat within 3-5 years. The project targets bobwhite quail and songbirds by providing critical nesting and brood-rearing habitat, as well as a beneficial food source. The nesting and brood-rearing habitat for bobwhite quail will be comprised of grasses and forbs. Turkey, deer and small mammals will also benefit from this conservation effort.

Texas

Texas Gulf Coast Prairies SAFE

The goal of the Texas Gulf Coast Prairies SAFE is to enroll 14,400 acres to restore grassland and shallow water habitats in the Gulf Coast Prairie region of Texas for a variety of bird species. During winter and breeding periods, grasslands and seasonal wet-

lands are valuable to mottled duck, northern bobwhite, Attwater greater prairie chicken, short-eared owl, Henslow's sparrow, Le Conte's sparrow, Sprague's pipit, grasshopper sparrow and numerous other bird species that are declining or otherwise of special conservation concern. The project will also help establish a network of large, high quality coastal prairie habitats with multiple core areas distributed along at least 100 linear miles. Additionally, this project will provide alternative income and land-use opportunities to agricultural producers in Southeast Texas that remain unable to farm some fields due to elevated soil salinities caused by the Hurricane Rita storm surge.

Texas Lower Rio Grande Thornscrub SAFE

The Texas Lower Rio Grande Thornscrub SAFE seeks to enroll 5,000 acres to restore Tamaulipan thornscrub habitat for the endangered ocelot and other wildlife species. Thornscrub is a habitat type dominated by thorn-covered shrubs and trees that grow in close proximity to form a thick, almost impenetrable vegetative layer. Moreover, the few remaining patches of thornscrub habitat are fragmented. Traversing between these patches of habitat is both difficult and dangerous for the ocelot. Connecting and expanding these habitat patches through SAFE will enhance the amount of habitat available to the ocelot, allowing them to move more freely. Row crop and orchard agriculture, as well as urban sprawl, have

contributed to the decline of the original thornscrub habitat in the Lower Rio Grande Valley.

Texas Mixed Grass SAFE

The goal of the Texas Mixed Grass SAFE project is to enroll 20,000 acres in CRP to reconnect geographically and reproductively isolated populations of lesser prairie chickens by creating native mixed grass prairie and travel corridors. This project will increase genetic diversity and aid range expansion among isolated lesser prairie chicken populations by establishing habitat and native mixed grass/legume corridors from existing crop and expired CRP lands. These habitat patches are necessary for population maintenance and expansion, safe movement and critically needed nesting and brood rearing. Restoration efforts also will benefit a large suite of other grassland-dependent species. Additionally, restoration efforts will improve water quality and quantity contributed to recharging the Ogallala Aquifer. The project seeks to restore the grass habitat in five years and reconnect two geographically isolated populations within 10 years of inception. Habitat management that includes prescribed burning, interseeding, or managed haying or grazing will be critical in maintaining the quality and usability of this habitat.

Virginia

Virginia Culpeper Basin SAFE

The goal of the Virginia Culpeper Basin SAFE is to enroll 1,000

acres to restore habitat for grass and shrubland birds in five years. The project will use native trees, shrubs, and warm season grasses to restore grass and shrubland-dependent bird habitats along the Rappahannock and Rapidan Rivers, as well as upland habitat adjacent to their tributaries. The project seeks to create wildlife corridors of diverse habitats in various stages of succession. The conservation practices will benefit successional species such as the bobwhite quail, loggerhead shrike, field sparrow and prairie warbler. It will also benefit imperiled grassland species such as the barn owl, eastern meadowlark, Henslow's sparrow, upland sandpiper and grasshopper sparrow. The mix of proposed habitat restoration will provide for nesting sites, food and cover needs of each of the species, as well as other wildlife dependent on successional habitats.

Virginia Longleaf Pine SAFE

The goal of the Virginia Longleaf Pine SAFE is to enroll 1,000 acres to re-establish longleaf pine stands in more than two dozen Virginia counties that benefit a variety of wildlife. The project seeks to increase habitat for red-cockaded woodpecker, Bachman's sparrow and redheaded woodpecker. The SAFE effort will also benefit the following bird species: prairie warbler, American kestrel, brown-headed nuthatch, eastern wood-peewee, blue-winged Warbler, white-eyed vireo, northern bobwhite, Carolina chickadee, brown thrasher, field sparrow, purple martin, red-tailed hawk and

others. In addition, many other wildlife and plant species will benefit from this habitat, especially in adjacent wetlands, such as pitcher plants, tiger salamanders, Mabee's salamanders, orchids, lillies and American chaffseed. The project will also help enhance water quality and to expand the area eligible for longleaf pine planting in Virginia.

Virginia Rare & Declining Habitats SAFE

The goal of the Virginia Rare & Declining Habitats SAFE project is to enroll 500 acres to restore migratory bird habitat. This project will use native hardwood trees, shrubs and grasses to restore and maintain habitats along the Eastern Shore of Virginia. The conservation effort will facilitate population increases of these species on the Eastern Shore within three years. It will control invasive species through various land management techniques. The following are some of the birds that will benefit from this project: yellow-billed cuckoo, gray catbird, wood thrush, Kentucky warbler, willow flycatcher, worm-eating warbler, red-headed woodpecker, scarlet tanager, Carolina chickadee, Cooper's hawk, red-shouldered hawk, American woodcock and yellow-throated vireo.

Virginia Riparian Buffer SAFE

The goal of the Virginia Riparian Buffer SAFE is to enroll 1,800 acres to expand riparian forest buffers for interior forest and riparian birds, as well as other wildlife. The project will establish forest buffers using native hardwood

tree plantings and control invasive species through various land management techniques. Project organizers hope to increase the reproduction and fledging success of bird species that are facing significant population declines. The following neotropical migratory birds are target species: Acadian flycatcher, Kentucky warbler, red-eyed vireo, scarlet tanager and wood thrush. Other neotropical migrants that will benefit include Swainson's warbler, eastern wood-pewee, yellow-billed cuckoo, ruby-throated hummingbird, great crested flycatcher, barn swallow, indigo bunting, purple martin and others. The following birds also will benefit: waterfowl, pileated woodpecker, bald eagle, heron, cavity nesting ducks, wood duck, red shouldered hawk, tufted titmouse, red-bellied woodpecker, downy woodpecker, northern cardinal and others. In addition, many other animals will benefit from wider buffers including beaver, mink and several reptile and amphibian species.

Washington**Washington Coastal Roosevelt Elk SAFE**

The goal of the Washington Coastal Roosevelt Elk SAFE project is to enroll 500 acres to increase habitat for the declining Olympic elk herd. Elk herds throughout the Olympic Peninsula have declined by 30 percent due to increased mortality or decreased productivity from declining habitat quality and quantity. Besides increasing habitat, SAFE will improve the vegetation for

elk, improving their health. This will enhance adult and calf survival rates and boost the elk population. Additionally, multiple wetland-dependent bird species, many of which are declining, will benefit from this project including shorebirds, swans and other waterfowl.

Washington Columbia Basin SAFE

The goal of the Washington Columbia Basin SAFE project is to enroll 500 acres to benefit ring-necked pheasant and California quail. In addition, the project will benefit at-risk species such as the burrowing owl and Washington ground squirrel, which are known to inhabit irrigated circle corners and other unfarmed areas.

Washington Palouse Prairie SAFE

The goal of the Washington Palouse Prairie SAFE is to enroll 2,000 acres to improve and increase Palouse Prairie habitat for a variety of wildlife species by re-establishing diverse stands of grasses, forbs and shrubs. Converting cropland to fields and corridors of permanent native plant communities will benefit wildlife species, including at-risk wildlife, such as grassland- and shrubland-nesting birds, and native pollinators. Many of these species are considered at greatest risk. Among the species that would benefit from this SAFE project are the grasshopper sparrow, short-eared owl, merlin, Swainson's hawk, savannah sparrow, long-billed curlew, Townsend's

big-eared bat, northern alligator lizard and western toad. Native butterflies that require plants of the Palouse Prairie would benefit from this project. They include Boisduval's blue, Gillette's checkerspot, Sheridan hairstreak, immaculate green hairstreak, square spotted blue and dun skipper. Resident upland and big game species such as ring-necked pheasant and white-tailed deer also will benefit. Establishing buffers around and near existing remnants of the Palouse Prairie will benefit rare and threatened plants and the giant Palouse earthworm.

Washington Shrub-steppe SAFE

The goal of the Eastern Washington Shrub-steppe SAFE is to enroll 5,200 acres to benefit shrub-steppe bird species that have declined because of ongoing habitat loss and fragmentation throughout the West. These are at-risk species with federal or state listing status that use the land in the project area: sharp-tailed grouse, sage grouse, sage sparrow, sage thrasher and loggerhead shrike. The grasshopper sparrow, savannah sparrow and Brewer's sparrow will benefit from the SAFE project.

Wisconsin**Wisconsin Glacial SAFE**

The goal of the Wisconsin Glacial SAFE is to establish a mosaic of grasslands and wetlands in a predominately agricultural landscape by enrolling 2,250 acres. This will

result in more favorable habitat conditions for self-sustaining populations of waterfowl, pheasants and grassland songbirds. This will be accomplished by enrolling the land in CRP. This SAFE will focus on benefiting bobolink, eastern meadowlark, grasshopper sparrow, Henslow's sparrow and ring-necked pheasant. Other bird species targeted by the GHRA project include Le Conte's sparrow, savanna sparrow, vesper sparrow, field sparrow, dickcissel, western meadowlark, Brewer's blackbird, loggerhead shrike, short-eared owl, northern harrier, sedge wren, Wilson's phalarope, upland sandpiper, blue-winged teal and mallard ducks.

Wisconsin Shortgrass SAFE

The goal of the Wisconsin Shortgrass SAFE is to increase Karner Blue butterfly habitat by enrolling 1,000 acres of short grass prairie. Karner Blue butterfly habitat requires a certain degree of disturbance to maintain a stable system, particularly for the larva's sole food source, wild blue lupine. The project will enhance the understanding of wild blue lupine establishment, linking Karner Blue butterfly use and occupation with short grass prairie restoration and enhancement in the project area. The development of Karner Blue butterfly habitat will also positively affect the soil and water quality of the watershed. The permanent cover resulting from the applied project practices will enhance the soil structure and water infiltration, while decreasing water runoff.

Wisconsin Southwest Grassland SAFE

The goal of the Wisconsin Southwest Grassland SAFE is to restore and maintain 4,000 acres of grassland and prairie habitat for 14 bird species of greatest conservation need in Wisconsin. The project boundary is called the Southwest Wisconsin Grassland Conservation Area. This area harbors an extraordinary density of original prairie remnants, outstanding populations of grassland birds and the headwaters of numerous rivers. The uncommon grassland bird species that will benefit from the SAFE project are bobolink, upland sandpiper, grasshopper sparrow, short-eared owl, northern harrier, western meadowlark, eastern meadowlark, Henslow's sparrow, vesper sparrow, Bell's vireo, dickcissel, northern bobwhite and field sparrow.

Wisconsin Central Grassland SAFE

The goal of the Wisconsin Central Grassland SAFE is to enroll 3,000 acres to restore native mid-short-grass and wetland habitats for four species of neotropical migrant songbirds: Henslow's sparrow, grasshopper sparrow, sedge wren and bobolink. The project seeks to improve and increase grassland/wetland habitat diversity to complement current CRP wildlife habitats. The SAFE will provide nesting, brood-rearing and feeding habitats for grassland birds. The conservation practice will provide habitat for other grassland fauna, including threatened and endangered species, in St. Croix and southwest Polk counties.

Wisconsin Western Prairie SAFE

The goal of the Wisconsin Western Prairie SAFE is to benefit grassland-dependent species of greatest conservation need (SGCN) by maintaining 2,500 acres of current grassland, while establishing new acres of native and introduced grasses, and native perennial legumes. Project partners expect to provide larger blocks of grassland, with smaller, scattered blocks of grassland in between to serve as stepping stones for species movement. Project partners expect the range of grassland habitat will meet the needs, such as food and nesting resources, of several SGCN. Additionally, this project strives to address priorities within Wisconsin's Wildlife Action Plan by restoring grassland habitat for several uncommon grassland-dependent bird species. Monitoring efforts will focus on the following five species: Henslow's sparrow, grasshopper sparrow, upland sandpiper, eastern meadowlark and bobolink.

For More Information

For more information about FSA and its conservation programs, visit <http://www.fsa.usda.gov> or visit your local FSA service center.

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