



FACT SHEET



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE -- FARM SERVICE AGENCY

SEPTEMBER 2008

Ohio State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) – CRP Practice CP38

Overview

USDA Farm Service Agency's (FSA) Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) in Ohio is aimed at creating conservation practices to address the highest priority wildlife objectives in the State through the use of targeted restoration of vital habitat. Ohio SAFE seeks to enroll up to 11,600 acres of cropland in CRP Practice CP38 for 10-15 years to benefit:

- threatened and endangered species habitat such as native grasslands and oak savannas;
- habitat for species that have suffered a significant population decline including Karner Blue Butterfly, Frosted Elfin Butterfly, Henslow's Sparrow, Dickcissel, and Copper-Bellied Watersnake; and
- habitat for species that provide significant social or economic value to the community such as Ring-Necked Pheasant, Wood Duck, American Bald Eagle and other migratory shorebirds and song birds attracting bird watchers from afar.

Ohio's SAFE is a State-led effort, mostly the result of Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) along with other public and private organizations such as U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Farm Service Agency, Pheasant's Forever, and Environmental Defense Fund. Ohio is targeting the SAFE CP38 practices in areas of local, regional, or even global biodiversity and declining species 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 SAFE is to build on established wildlife areas to enhance the habitat objectives for those areas and at the same time meet the goals of National SAFE initiative. The SAFE priority focus areas are:

- Grand River/Mosquito Creek Wetland Focus Area
- Killbuck Wetland Focus Area
- Killdeer Plains/ Big Island Grassland Focus Area
- Kitty Todd/ Oak Openings Savanna Focus Area
- LaSuAn Grassland Focus Area
- Western Lake Erie Marshes Wetland Focus Area
- Paint Creek Grassland Focus Area
- Southern Ohio Grassland Bird Priority Area

The Ohio SAFE project seeks to enroll 11,600 acres of cropland in certain townships surrounding selected ODNR and TNC priority focus areas into CRP practice CP38 for 10 to 15 years to benefit grassland and wetland-dependent birds and other high priority wildlife, while at the same time restoring native grassland, wetland complexes, and oak savannas.

Eligibility

Because the initiative is limited to 11,600 acres in Ohio, enrollment is targeted to designated townships within certain geographic priority focus areas (see map below). Any of the following SAFE practices may be installed on cropland with a proven cropping history of 4-6 years between 1996-2001:



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- CP38B (Shallow Water Areas for Wildlife)
- CP38C (Rare and Declining Habitat - Oak Savanna)
- CP38E (Establishment of Permanent Native Grasses; and Rare and Declining Habitat - Tall Grass Prairie; and Rare and Declining Habitat - Wetland Complexes)

Cropland must be legally and physically capable of producing a crop in a normal manner and must be owned for at least 1 year prior to submitting an offer. Contract period will be 10-15 years. 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 grass, forbs, and/or trees as outlined in the Conservation Plan of Operations.

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 plus a \$2 per acre annual maintenance payment.
- 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 mid-contract management practices on CP38 practices at least 12 years in length and one mid-contract management activity period on contracts less than 12 years in length. Mid-contract management activities may include light disking, controlled burning, interseeding forbs/grasses/legumes, interseeding wetland vegetation, water level manipulation, chemical application, and prescribed mowing used in conjunction with other activities. 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.

Other incentives include an additional 10% cost share for certain SAFE practice covers established in the Kitty/Todd Oak Opening area up to a program total of \$15,000 on a first come, first served basis provided by Environmental Defense Fund. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will provide up to a program total of \$15,000 for native genotype seed or plants (where available) for Karner Blue Butterfly restoration sites on a first come, first served basis.

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.



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Other SAFE Benefits

SAFE:

- Provides a unique opportunity for landowners and producers, within the priority focus areas, to enroll whole field acres outside the floodplain in CRP under a continuous signup;
- Provides the ability to pay PIP to participants on wetland practices and the additional incentives offered by conservation partners will also reduce participant out-of-pocket costs; and
- Will complement and fill the void left by 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 and 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 contracts are terminated because of contract violations or who request to voluntarily terminate their CRP contract 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. 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 Farm Service Agency's website at:

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

