

Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma Migratory Birds, Butterflies and Pollinators SAFE

State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE)



Overview

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Playa Lake and Rainwater Basin Joint Ventures are partners in implementing a State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) project to enroll agricultural land containing playas in parts of Nebraska, Kansas and Oklahoma. Playa wetlands are shallow depressions that often fill with water after rainstorms. The purpose of the Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma Migratory Birds, Butterflies and Pollinators SAFE is to restore playas to their proper function, providing benefits that include improved water quality, water recharge for the Ogallala Aquifer, and habitat for migrating waterfowl, cranes, and shorebirds.

Background

SAFE is part of the USDA Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). CRP is a federally funded voluntary program that contracts with landowners and agricultural producers to establish and manage vegetative covers that control soil erosion, improve water quality, and provide wildlife habitat.

SAFE is a unique type of CRP that offers organizations the opportunity to partner with the USDA to establish habitat for high-priority wildlife species on agricultural land. SAFE sponsors work with the USDA to identify the wildlife species, the vegetative cover that provides habitat for the target species, and the location in the state where the habitat is needed. A partnership is formed between the SAFE sponsor and the USDA, and federal funds are made available to allow for CRP enrollment on eligible land within the SAFE project location.

Target Wildlife Species

The goal of the Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma Migratory Birds, Butterflies and Pollinators SAFE project is to provide habitat for migrating and wintering waterfowl such as the Northern pintail, shorebirds such as the declining Baird's sandpiper and Hudsonian godwit and waterbirds including the whooping crane.

In addition to providing habitat for migratory birds, the seeding mixtures that will be used will contain a variety of

forbs, including milkweed to maximize habitat for pollinators and other priority species like monarch butterflies.

Habitat

Landowners and agricultural producers participating in Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma Migratory Birds, Butterflies and Pollinators SAFE are required to develop a conservation plan with assistance from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) or a technical service provider. The conservation plan will provide details on how to restore playa hydrology, establish buffers, and manage habitat for the target species. The playa wetlands being restored will provide essential roosting, loafing, and foraging habitat for millions of migrating birds that rely on these wetland habitats. In addition to the wildlife benefits, the restored playa wetlands will increase recharge to the Ogallala Aquifer. After the habitat is established, it will need to be maintained and managed with appropriate management activities such as prescribed burning, prescribed grazing, interseeding forbs/legumes and selective use of herbicides. Proper habitat establishment, maintenance, and management will maximize benefits for wetland dependent species.



Project Location

The Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma Migratory Birds, Butterflies and Pollinators SAFE project location:

Kansas—Cheyenne, Clark, Finney, Ford, Gove, Graham, Grant, Gray, Greely, Hamilton, Haskell, Hodgeman, Kearny, Lane, Logan, Meade, Morton, Ness, Rawlins, Scott, Seward, Sheridan, Sherman, Stanton, Stevens, Thomas, Wallace, Wichita.

Nebraska—Adams, Banner, Buffalo, Butler, Chase, Cheyenne, Clay, Custer, Dawson, Deuel, Dundy, Fillmore, Franklin, Frontier, Garden, Gosper, Hall, Hamilton, Harlan, Hayes, Hitchcock, Kearney, Keith, Kimball, Lincoln, Logan, Nuckolls, Perkins, Phelps, Polk, Saline, Seward, Sherman, Thayer, Valley, Webster, York.

Oklahoma—Beaver, Cimarron, Texas.

Eligible CRP Practices

This SAFE project uses the following CRP practices:

- ◆ CP38B-23A, Wetland Restoration non-floodplain

Haying and Grazing

All current non-emergency and emergency haying and grazing provisions are authorized for this SAFE project.

When using grazing to meet the management activity requirement, grazing must be completed using state developed guidance.

Eligibility Requirements

Because SAFE is part of CRP, certain land and participant eligibility rules apply. To begin with, land must be in the project area and meet cropping history. CRP participant eligibility rules also apply to SAFE.

Payments and Incentives

In exchange for participation in CRP SAFE, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) provides participants with annual per acre rental payments, cost-share to assist with habitat establishment expenses, and in some cases additional monetary incentives.

This project uses a competitive bid process, whereby landowners submit an offer to enroll their playa acres for the amount they are willing to accept as an annual payment. Offers must be between the average NASS irrigated rental rates and dryland rates for the applicable physical location of the offered acreage. Offers will compete for enrollment and scoring will favor those tracts with larger playas, greater wetland acres, offers that contain the entire playa wetland, are over declining portions of the Ogallala Aquifer, and have lower bid offers.

For More Information

This fact sheet is provided for informational purposes only; other restrictions or requirements may apply. Consult your local FSA office for details. For more information, contact your local service center and USDA Farm Service Agency office: farmers.gov/service-locator.



Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma Migratory Birds, Butterflies and Pollinators SAFE Project Map

