

Iowa Grand River Grassland SAFE

State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE)



Overview

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Iowa Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Bureau are partners in implementing a State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) project to enroll agricultural land in Ringgold and Decatur counties in south-central Iowa. The purpose of the Iowa Grand River Grassland SAFE is to increase populations of the Greater prairie-chicken, by restoring short native grassland habitats.

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 Iowa Grand River Grassland SAFE project is to provide habitat for Greater prairie-chickens. Greater prairie-chickens are important to Iowa because they were historically found statewide in Iowa prior to settlement, but were extirpated from Iowa in 1956 due to habitat loss. A small population was reintroduced into south-central Iowa in 1987.

Habitat

Landowners and agricultural producers participating in Iowa Grand River Grassland 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 plant, establish, and manage habitat for Greater prairie-chickens. Offers must be a minimum of 5 acres if not immediately adjacent to an existing wildlife habitat complex. All offers will establish short native grasses and wildflowers planted as a mix with a minimum of 4 grass and 6 wildflower species, more diversity is encouraged. Native plants will have a growth form of less than 20 inches in height. Legumes will be 50 percent of the wildflower mix. Shrub plantings and winter grain food plots will be allowed, but are not required. After the habitat is established, it will need to be maintained and managed by non-emergency grazing, disking, prescribed burning, and high clipping will be allowed. Proper habitat establishment, maintenance, and management will maximize benefits for Greater prairie-chickens.

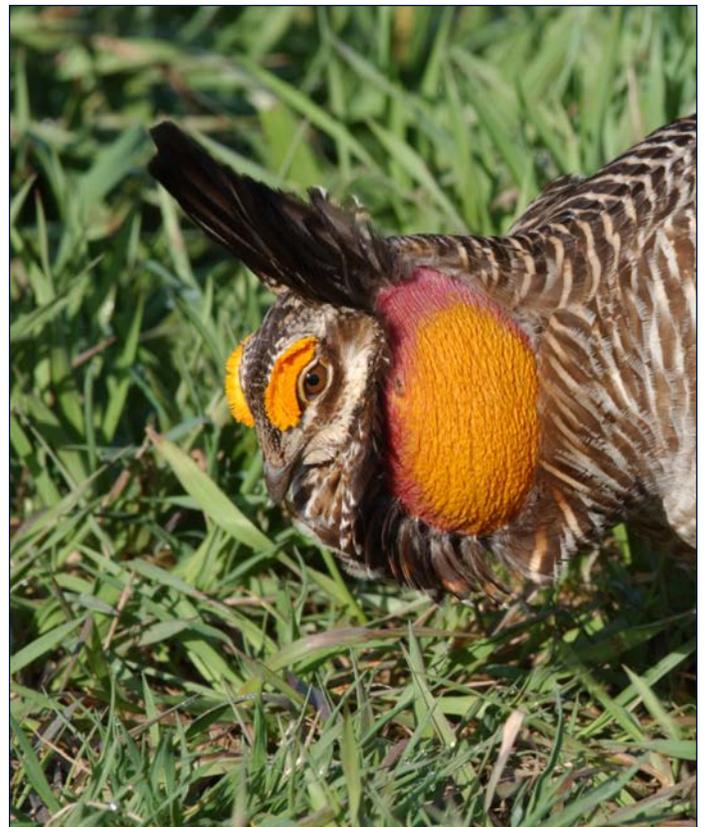


Photo by Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Project Location

The Iowa Grand River Grassland SAFE project location is the western portion of Decatur county and the eastern half of Ringgold county.

Eligible CRP Practices

This SAFE project uses the following CRP practices:

- ◆ CP38E-CP4D Permanent Wildlife Habitat
- ◆ CP38E-CP12 Wildlife Food Plot

Haying and Grazing

Non-emergency grazing is authorized on all offers, but only 50% of a contract may be grazed in any calendar year. Emergency grazing is not authorized. Emergency and non-emergency haying is not authorized.

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.

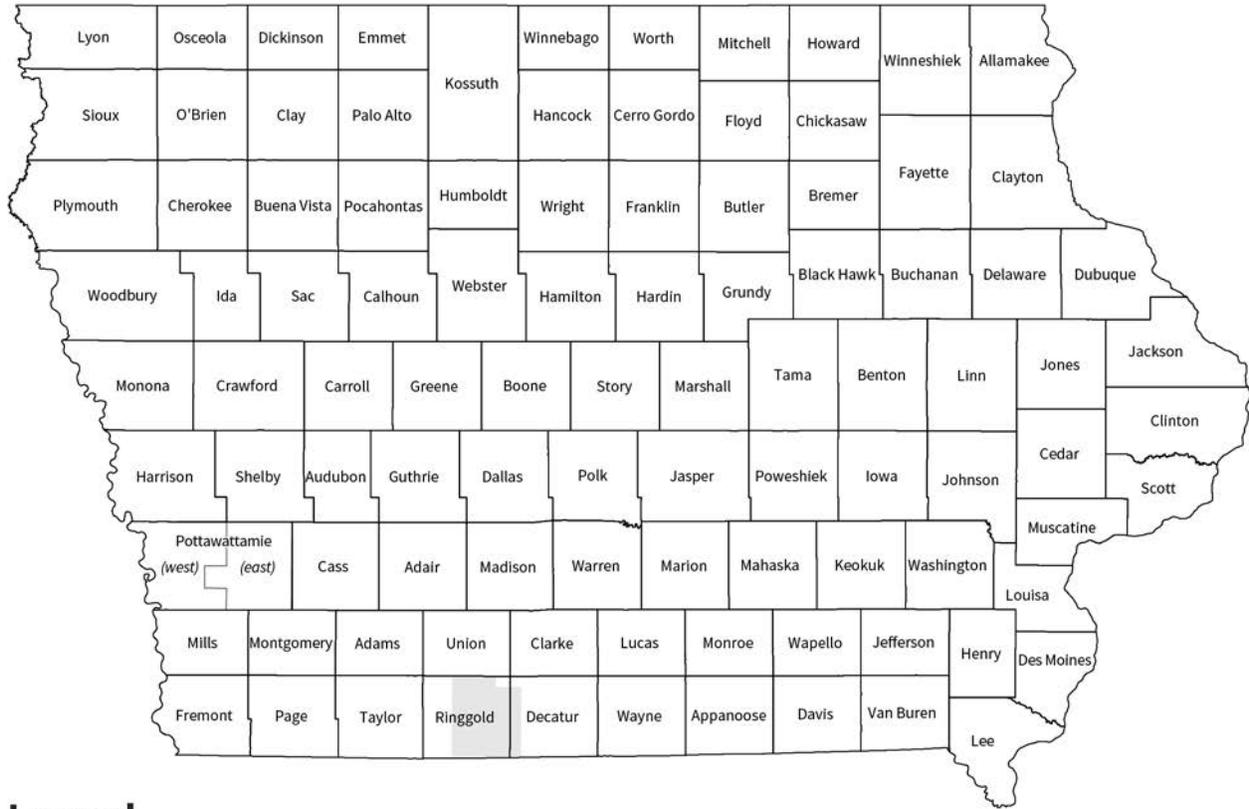
For More Information

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 or nearest DNR office: iowadnr.gov/crp.



Photo Courtesy Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

Iowa Grand River Grassland SAFE Project Map



Legend

- FSA County Boundary
- Iowa Grand River Grassland SAFE Project Area