



## Farm Service Agency

### Conservation Reserve Program State Acres for Wildlife (SAFE) : Migratory Birds, Butterflies and Pollinators in Nebraska

INFORMATION  
BULLETIN  
September 2021

## Overview

The Migratory Birds, Butterflies and Pollinators Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) State Acres for Wildlife (SAFE) project is designed to provide private land owners a market-based financial incentive for restoring playa wetlands.

Playa wetlands are shallow depressions that often fill with water after spring rainstorms, providing habitat for millions of migratory birds and recharging the underlying aquifers. There are three playa areas of Nebraska included in this CRP SAFE: Central Table Playas, Southwest Playas, and Rainwater Basin.

There are 42 Nebraska counties with land included in the project area: Adams, Banner, Blaine, Buffalo, Butler, Chase, Cheyenne, Clay, Custer, Dawson, Deuel, Dundy, Fillmore, Franklin, Frontier, Furnas, Garden, Gosper, Hall, Hamilton, Harlan, Hayes, Hitchcock, Jefferson, Kearney, Keith, Kimball, Lancaster, Lincoln, Logan, Loup, Morrill, Nuckolls, Perkins, Phelps, Polk, Saline, Seward, Thayer, Valley, Webster and York.

The purpose of this CRP 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 agricultural producers so that environmentally sensitive land is not farmed, but instead used for conservation benefits. CRP participants establish permanent, resource-conserving plant species, such as approved grasses or trees (known as “covers”) to control soil erosion, improve water quality and develop wildlife habitat. In return, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) provides participants with rental payments and cost-share assistance. CRP is authorized by the Food Security Act of 1985 and was reauthorized by the 2018 Farm Bill.



*Photo courtesy: Rainwater Basin Joint Venture*

## Program Basics

Land owners within the targeted project area will contact their local USDA Service Center to determine eligibility of their playa acres. The minimum enrollment per offer is two acres, and the maximum enrollment per offer is 160 acres.

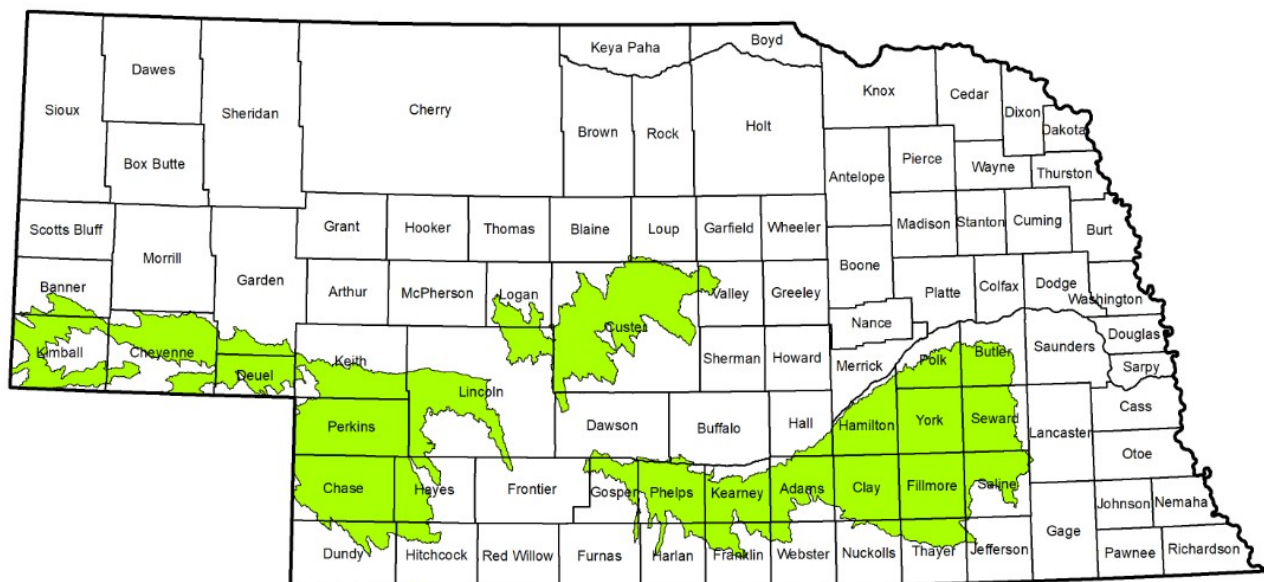
This project uses a competitive bid process, whereby landowners submit an offer to enroll their playa acres for the amount they are willing to accept as an annual payment. Offers must be between the average NASS irrigated rental rates and dryland rates. Contracts are for a period of 10-15 years. Offers compete against each other within each playa complex, with 50 percent of the offers being accepted in each complex. 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.

Contract offers can be submitted through FSA at any time, and those offers will be ranked at intervals in a competitive bid process. Once a contract offer is accepted by FSA, land owners will work with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) regarding the technical assistance necessary to restore the contract area.

## CRP SAFE - NEBRASKA - Migratory Birds, Butterflies and Pollinators - September 2021



### Migratory Bird State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) Eligible Areas of Nebraska



#### Eligible Wetland Areas

High Playa Wetland Density Hydrologic Units (HUC)



0 35 70 105 140 Miles



Produced by the Rainwater Basin Joint Venture, Grand Island, NE

## Program Details

To be eligible, the playa hydrology must be restored to the full extent possible, as determined by NRCS. There may be cost-share available through a combination of CRP Sign-up Incentive Payments and Practice Incentive Payments. The CRP practice required for this project is CP38B, a shallow water areas for wildlife practice. Additional cost-share may be available from other partner agencies.

Some requirements for land to be eligible include:

- Must have been planted four out of six years from 2012 through 2017;
- Portion of field located in project area;
- Is located outside a 100-year floodplain;
- Is a playa lake/wetland.

Marginal pastureland is not eligible. No wetland determination is required or needed.

## More Information

This information bulletin is provided for informational purposes only; other eligibility requirements or restrictions may apply. For more information on the Migratory Birds, Butterflies and Pollinators CRP SAFE, contact your local FSA office. To locate office information, go to [farmers.gov/service-center-locator](https://farmers.gov/service-center-locator).