



Farm Service Agency

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

FACT SHEET | JANUARY 2023

Overview

The Migratory Birds, Butterflies and Pollinators Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (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 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: The Rainwater Basins, Central Table Playas and Southwest Playas.

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. Playa restoration is reversing past modifications to playas by removing accumulated sediment, filling drainage features, redirecting water back into the playa, and protecting the playa with a buffer composed of native vegetation.

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 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: Ducks Unlimited

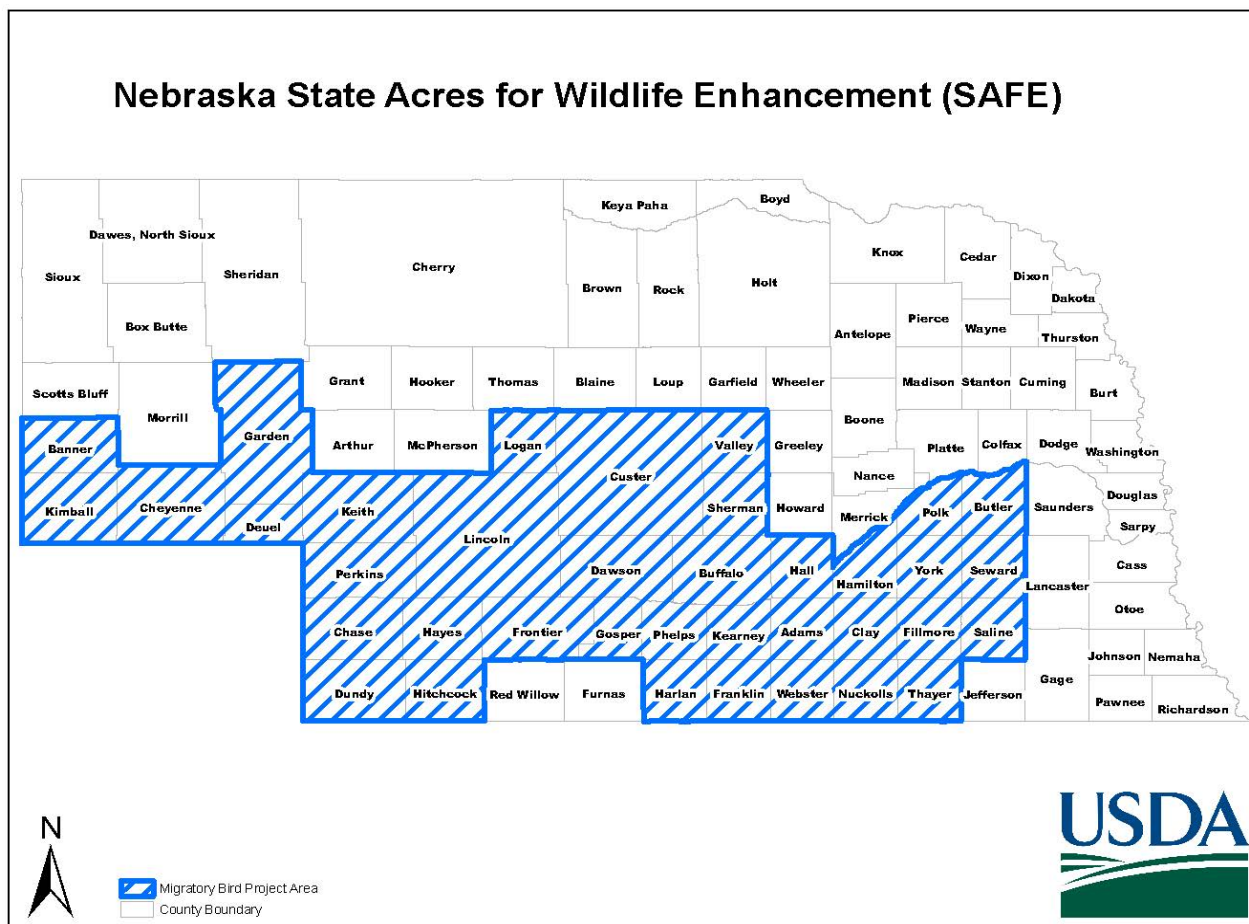
Program Details

Interested landowners within the targeted project area should contact their local County FSA Office to determine eligibility of their playa acres. The minimum enrollment per offer is two 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 for the applicable physical location of the offered acreage. Contracts are for a period of 10-15 years. 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.

Contract offers can be submitted through FSA during announced batching periods, 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.

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Program Details (cont'd)

There are 37 Nebraska counties with land included in the project area: 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, and York.

To be eligible, the playa hydrology must be restored to the maximum extent possible, as determined by NRCS. There may be cost-share available including a one-time CRP Sign-up Incentive Payment (SIP) and Practice Incentive Payment (PIP). The CRP practice required for this project is CP38B-23A, Wetland Restoration, Non-floodplain practice. Additional financial assistance opportunities 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;
- Majority of offered acreage within project area;
- Is located outside 100-year floodplain;
- Contains at least one playa.

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

More Information

This 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:
www.farmers.gov/working-with-us/service-center-locator.