

Washington Palouse Prairie SAFE

State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE)



Overview

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife are partnering on a State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) project to enroll agricultural land in portions of Asotin, Columbia, Garfield, and Whitman counties in Washington state. Historically Palouse Prairie was the dominant habitat type in southeastern Washington and adjacent northern Idaho; now less than 1% of historic Palouse Prairie habitat remains. The Washington Palouse Prairie SAFE is vital to conserving, connecting, and enhancing the remaining habitat in the region. The project's purpose is to conserve and enhance Palouse Prairie habitat at a landscape scale and increase connectivity between patches of native prairie to benefit multiple species including pollinators, the giant Palouse earthworm, ring-necked pheasant, white-tailed deer, and mule deer.

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 Washington Palouse Prairie SAFE project is to conserve remnant Palouse Prairie habitat and provide additional habitat to benefit giant Palouse earthworm and ring-necked pheasant, while also providing essential migration corridors, refugia, and forage for white-tailed deer, mule deer, and pollinators.

Habitat

Landowners and agricultural producers participating in Washington Palouse Prairie SAFE are required to develop a conservation plan with assistance from the Natural Resources Conservation Service or a technical service provider. The conservation plan will provide details on how to plant, establish, and manage habitat for pollinators, giant Palouse earthworms, ring-necked pheasants, white-tailed deer, and mule deer. The project establishes a variety of habitats including prairie grasslands/shrublands (meadow steppe and shrubsteppe), draws and patches dominated by deciduous shrubs and trees, riparian areas dominated by deciduous shrubs and trees, and wetlands and moist meadows dominated by herbaceous plants. After the habitat is established, it will need to be maintained and managed by activities such as herbicide and mechanical weed treatments, light disking, rotary clipping, prescribed burning, harrowing, and inter-seeding to create plant diversity for the benefit of wildlife and enhancement of the permanent cover. Proper habitat establishment, maintenance, and management will maximize benefits for pollinators, giant Palouse earthworms, ring-necked pheasants, white-tailed deer, and mule deer.



Photo by Alan L Bauer, WDFW

Project Location

The Washington Palouse Prairie SAFE project encompasses 3,528 square miles (about 2.26 million acres) within portions of Asotin, Columbia, Garfield, and Whitman counties.

Eligible CRP Practices

This SAFE project uses the following CRP practices:

- ◆ CP38A-21, SAFE Filter Strips
- ◆ CP38A-22, SAFE Riparian Forest Buffer (MPL not eligible for this SAFE project)
- ◆ CP38B-23, SAFE Wetland Restoration
- ◆ CP38B-23A, SAFE Wetland Restoration, Non-Floodplain
- ◆ CP38B-27, SAFE Farmable Wetland
- ◆ CP38B-28, SAFE Farmable Wetland Buffer
- ◆ CP38C-25, SAFE Rare and Declining Habitat — Palouse Prairie
- ◆ CP38E-4D, SAFE Permanent Wildlife Habitat
- ◆ CP38E-2, SAFE Permanent Native Grasses
- ◆ CP38E-25, SAFE Rare and Declining Habitat — Palouse Prairie

Haying and Grazing

Although the 2018 Farm Bill allows haying and grazing on all CRP practices, haying, and grazing are not allowed on any Washington State SAFE practices.

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.





Photo by David Woodall, WDFW

Washington Palouse Prairie SAFE Project Map



Legend

-  FSA County Boundary
-  Washington Palouse Prairie SAFE Project Area