

**For:** State and County Offices

**State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE)**

**Approved by:** Deputy Administrator, Farm Programs



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**1 Overview**

**A Background**

On March 22, 2007, FSA announced a new initiative, SAFE, to allow State Offices to address local wildlife conservation needs. SAFE allows producers to install practices that benefit high priority State wildlife conservation objectives through the use of targeted restoration of vital habitat. This cooperative conservation effort is based on locally-developed conservation proposals that address the highest priority wildlife objectives in the State before the practice may be implemented. The proposals will be considered by FSA STC after a review by the State Technical Committee. CEPD will review all STC recommendations.

**B Purpose**

This notice provides the following:

- information about submitting proposals for SAFE to FSA State Offices
- criteria for SAFE
- general practice information.

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<b>Disposal Date</b>	<b>Distribution</b>
September 1, 2007	State Offices; State Offices relay to County Offices and NRCS

## Notice CRP-560

### 1 Overview (Continued)

#### C General Information

SAFE provides an opportunity to develop grassroots cooperative conservation projects to address high priority wildlife needs through habitat restoration. The practices must be used to address wildlife habitat that can be enhanced through the restoration of eligible cropland through CRP. Enrollment is available under continuous signup criteria.

SAFE practices can be used to restore the following:

- threatened and endangered species habitat
- habitat for species that have suffered a significant population decline

**Examples:** This could include species, such as Lesser Prairie Chicken, Sharp-Tailed Grouse, or Northern Bob White.

- habitat for species that provide significant social or economic value to the community.

**Note:** This includes restoration of habitat for game species, such as pheasant or quail habitat, salmon or steelhead stream habitat, or for other economically significant species.

SAFE practice proposals must afford measurable and tangible benefits to the desired species.

### 2 Policy

#### A Cropland Eligibility

Eligible cropland is cropland:

- according to 2-CRP, paragraph 97
- located within the State-designated SAFE area.

**Notes:** Marginal pastureland is **not** eligible.

All or part of a State may be included.

#### B Continuous Signup

Continuous signup enrollment is authorized.

## Notice CRP-560

### 2 Policy (Continued)

#### C Contract Duration and Effective Date

The CRP-1 period for CRP contracts is 10 to 15 years.

The effective date of CRP-1 is the first day of the month following the month COC approves the contract.

#### D Incentives

Practice incentive payments and SIP are authorized.

#### E Management Activity

Approved SAFE proposals shall have periodic management activities performed, according to the conservation plan, during the life of CRP-1, as determined by COC. This activity may be based on the management activity approved for the CRP practice used as a basis for the SAFE practices. If new or modified management activities are necessary, these activities must be established according to 2-CRP, paragraph 239.

#### F Cost Share

CCC will pay up to 50 percent of the eligible cost of establishing a permanent cover. State Offices must develop a cost-share table similar to 2-CRP, Exhibit 9, after practices are selected.

**Note:** See 2-CRP, Exhibit 9, page 6 for an example.

#### G Acreage Allocation

Total enrollment shall not exceed 500,000 acres. Acreage is allocated to States based on weighted average cropland. State projects will be limited to the State's allocation. See Exhibit 1. State Offices that can demonstrate that their proposal targets at-risk species may request an additional acreage allocation for the project. Justification must be provided to receive an additional allocation of acres. 50,000 acres have been reserved at the National level to address these requests for additional acres for at-risk species.

### 3 SAFE Proposals

#### A Proposal Development

A SAFE proposal may be developed and put forth by a Federal, State, or local agency or by a private organization. Ideally, all partners will develop proposals under the Administration's Collaborative Conservation umbrella. The proposal shall be developed consistent with the process set forth in this paragraph and shall comply with the format outlined in Exhibit 2.

## Notice CRP-560

### 3 SAFE Proposals (Continued)

#### A Proposal Development (Continued)

Proposals shall be based on the existing CRP framework and CRP practices. Approved proposals shall correlate to existing CRP practices. All proposals must be limited to the following SAFE practices and the applicable CRP practices.

SAFE Practice	Practice Type	Applicable CRP Practices
CP38A	Buffers	CP8A, CP21, CP22
CP38B	Wetlands	CP9, CP23, CP23A, CP27, CP28
CP38C	Trees	CP3, CP3A, CP11, CP16, CP17, CP25, CP32, CP31, CP35, CP37
CP38D	Longleaf Pine	CP3A, CP36
CP38E	Grass	CP1, CP2, CP4D, CP8, CP10, CP12, CP15's, CP18's, CP24, CP25, CP33

A SAFE proposal may select 1 or more CRP practices for use as SAFE practices. CRP practices may be used without modification, or 1 or more practices may be modified. See subparagraph B.

**Example:** SAFE practices intended to restore habitat for the benefit of Sharp-Tailed Grouse in Idaho may incorporate CP2 (Native Grass Restoration) and CP4D (Permanent Wildlife Habitat, Noneasement) as best suited for the project and these practices may be used under CP38E (Grass) without changes.

#### B Practice Modifications

CRP practices outlined in 2-CRP may be modified by imposing additional requirements within 2-CRP practice standard guidelines. These changes apply only within the approved SAFE practice geographic area.

**Note:** Practice requirements may not be relaxed.

**Example:** The Sharp-Tailed Grouse Restoration SAFE practice, CP38E, could require all plantings (based on CP4D) to have 5 native species of grasses plus a requirement that Silver Sage Brush be a part of the planting.

The Sharp-Tailed Grouse Restoration SAFE practice, CP38E, could alter CP2 (Native Grass Restoration) by the seeding rates or frequency of disturbance.

Rationale for CRP practice modifications shall be:

- part of the SAFE proposal
- supported by scientifically-defensible information or expert judgment.

## Notice CRP-560

### 3 SAFE Proposals (Continued)

#### C Proposal Review

All SAFE proposals shall be submitted to the FSA State Office. After a review for completeness, the FSA State Office will request the State Technical Committee to review which will report its recommendations to FSA STC. FSA STC shall review all proposals and, giving consideration to State Technical Committee recommendations, then forward their recommendations for implementation to CEPD. When submitting STC-approved proposals to CEPD, recommendations shall be provided as electronic copies to Kiley Barnes by e-mail at [kiley.barnes@wdc.usda.gov](mailto:kiley.barnes@wdc.usda.gov) at the start of the review process.

**Note:** If there are questions, contact Kiley Barnes at 202-720-8772.

CEPD shall review proposals for conformity with this notice, CRP regulations, and the CRP authorizing legislation before issuing proposal approval.

A State may have multiple:

- SAFE practices approved and implemented within a project area
- project areas approved.

#### D Timeframe

Software is expected to be functional by January 2008. SAFE proposals shall be submitted to CEPD by November 1, 2007.

**Note:** STC's shall discuss with State Technical Committees to determine any timeframe for accepting SAFE proposals to ensure that proposals are submitted to CEPD by November 1, 2007.

#### E Performance Reporting

Each SAFE proposal shall provide an annual performance report. The annual report shall be sent before December 31st of each year and shall include the following:

- overview of project accomplishments
- description of each modified practice and list of all practices
- enrollment by practice
- State/private resource commitment
- monitoring/evaluation methods and results
- outreach efforts.

**Note:** The report shall be sent to CEPD electronically as a Microsoft Word document with data in either Excel or Access.

## Notice CRP-560

### 3 SAFE Proposals (Continued)

#### F Performance Monitoring and Evaluation

To determine whether the practices selected create the desired habitat, each proposal submitted to an FSA State Office shall collaborate with qualified professionals in the wildlife community to design and implement an appropriate habitat and wildlife population monitoring and evaluation plan. Wildlife population response to the habitat must be conducted in a scientifically defensible manner (Exhibit 2), use generally accepted techniques, and make the resulting data, papers, and reports available to FSA and the scientific community.

### 4 Action

#### A Conference Calls

Conference calls will be held to discuss this notice. State Offices must contact Laura Bryant at 202-720-4778 to schedule a time for their conference call. Only 10 conference lines have been reserved for each conference call. The conference call telephone number is 866-711-0842. The participant passcode is 3124907#.

The conference call schedule is as follows.

Date	Time
Wednesday, March 28, 2007	10:00 – 11:00 a.m. (Eastern)
Wednesday, March 28, 2007	1:00 – 2:00 p.m. (Eastern)
Wednesday, March 28, 2007	3:00 – 4:00 p.m. (Eastern)
Thursday, March 29, 2007	10:00 – 11:00 a.m. (Eastern)
Thursday, March 29, 2007	1:00 – 2:00 p.m. (Eastern)

#### B State Office Action

State Offices shall:

- distribute this notice to the State Technical Committee
- comply with the provisions of this notice, accept SAFE proposals that conform to Exhibit 2
- submit SAFE proposal to CEPD according to Exhibit 3.

State Acreage Allocation

State	Acres
Alabama	3,800
Alaska	1,000
Arizona	1,300
Arkansas	9,700
California	11,200
Colorado	11,700
Connecticut	1,000
Delaware	1,000
Florida	3,800
Georgia	4,800
Hawaii	1,000
Idaho	6,300
Illinois	24,600
Indiana	13,100
Iowa	27,700
Kansas	30,100
Kentucky	8,600
Louisiana	5,200
Maine	1,000
Maryland	1,500
Massachusetts	1,000
Michigan	8,100
Minnesota	23,100
Mississippi	5,900
Missouri	19,200
Montana	18,700
Nebraska	22,900
Nevada	1,000
New Hampshire	1,000
New Jersey	1,000
New Mexico	2,600
New York	4,900
North Carolina	5,600
North Dakota	27,000
Ohio	11,600
Oklahoma	15,100
Oregon	5,500
Pennsylvania	5,200
Puerto Rico	1,000
Rhode Island	1,000

State Acreage Allocation (Continued)

<b>State</b>	<b>Acres</b>
South Carolina	2,300
South Dakota	20,700
Tennessee	7,100
Texas	39,400
Utah	2,100
Vermont	1,000
Virginia	4,300
Washington	8,200
West Virginia	1,200
Wisconsin	10,900
Wyoming	3,000
<b>Reserve</b>	<b>50,000</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>500,000</b>

**SAFE Proposal Format**

SAFE proposals shall be prepared according to the following criteria:

- separate required information into sections, as described
- use bulleted lists, tables, or short narratives
- submit an electronic copy in Microsoft Word
- no more than 5 to 10 pages in length.

Provide the following:

- cover sheet with the following:
  - project name
  - contact organization, name, address, telephone number, FAX number, and e-mail address
  - stakeholders
  - State or States
  - county or counties
  - Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC) (11- to 14-digit code)
- goal of the project:
  - describing the desired goal of the project
  - providing measurable program outcomes and timeframes for when the outcomes would be achieved
- description of the project with the following:
  - defined project boundaries (State, county, HUC code (11- to 14-digit code))
  - GIS file of the project boundaries in Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) shape file format
  - CRP acreage request for SAFE
  - list of SAFE practices and applied CRP practices
  - with each applicable CRP practice, list the proposed additional requirements
  - technical practice requirements (number of species, species selection, planting requirements, etc.) for each SAFE practice

**SAFE Proposal Format (Continued)**

- habitat type to be restored
- map of land use and existing habitat types in project area (proposed CRP land in relationship to existing habitats) as an attachment in ESRI shape file format
- brief description of existing conditions (human and environmental within the project area)
- description of other Federal, State, and private efforts to achieve project goals and objectives
- description of benefits:
  - describing benefits (including societal, recreational, economic, and environmental) of the proposed project
  - describing relationship to existing Federal and State Wildlife plans or strategies, such as the State Wildlife Comprehensive Strategies
- description of the cost to:
  - estimate FSA CRP payments
  - provide any additional State and private resources that will assist in the project
  - provide estimated CCC life of project costs
  - provide estimated State and private partners out-of-pocket costs
- description of Monitoring/Evaluation Plan

**Note:** A habitat and wildlife population monitoring and evaluation plan is required and shall use generally accepted techniques appropriate to the geographic area and habitat type.
- description of the Public Outreach Program:
  - providing a discussion of the public support and outreach efforts to support the program
  - describing any communication plan for the proposed project
  - developing and providing a fact sheet about the SAFE practice for use with producers.

**Proposal Package Submission**

Each proposal submitted to CEPD must include, at a minimum, all of the following:

- copy of FSA STC minutes
- copy of NRCS State Technical Committee minutes
- shape files (about 2)
- proposal (5 to 10 pages)
- 2-CRP amendment, including modifications to Exhibit 9 practice write-up for SAFE
- fact sheets for SAFE practice (State-specific).