



Farm Service Agency Conservation Reserve Program

WASHINGTON SHRUBSTEPPE STATE ACRES FOR WILDLIFE ENHANCEMENT (SAFE) INITIATIVE

Fact Sheet
December 2020

HABITAT RESTORATION | CARBON SEQUESTRATION | WATER QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

Why Choose CRP State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement?

The State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) Initiative restores vital habitat in order to meet high priority state wildlife conservation goals. The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) provides farmers and landowners with several opportunities like this to achieve many conservation goals. Through the Washington Shrubsteppe SAFE Initiative, landowners establish native grasses, shrubs, and forbs. These practices are designed to benefit wildlife including sage-grouse, sharp-tailed grouse, pygmy rabbit, pollinators, and mule deer by creating habitat and food sources. They also protect soil and water quality by reducing erosion and nutrient run-off before sediment and nutrients reach waterways.

Washington Shrubsteppe SAFE Practices:

General CRP Signup:

- CP38E-4D Grass – Permanent Wildlife Habitat

Continuous CRP Signup:

- CP38A-22 Buffer – Riparian Forest Buffer

Please check with your local FSA county office for signup periods for SAFE practices in your area.

SAFE Initiative Benefits

Wildlife species targeted by SAFE include those designated as rare and declining, of significant social importance, and of greatest conservation need. Focal species include Greater sage-grouse, Columbian sharp-tailed grouse, Columbia Basin pygmy rabbit, pollinators, and mule deer. Both grouse species are listed species in Washington and Columbia Basin pygmy rabbit is listed federally endangered. Populations of many pollinators are declining, but are critical to reproduction of many plants and play a critical role in production of about 75 percent of our food. Mule deer are an important game species in Washington.

SAFE Initiative Impacts

Establishes shrubsteppe habitat with a diverse mix of native grasses, forbs, and shrubs; and riparian habitat with a diverse mix of native trees and shrubs. Shrubsteppe habitat is important for all the species targeted by this initiative. Riparian habitat is especially important to sharp-tailed grouse seeking winter cover and forage.

Additional benefits include:

- High-quality habitats available for a variety of declining shrubsteppe species;
- Food sources increased for many wildlife species;
- Critical nectar sources provided for pollinators;
- Flexible options for landowners to enhance their lands for wildlife;
- Improved water quality and reduced soil erosion;
- Improved soil health.



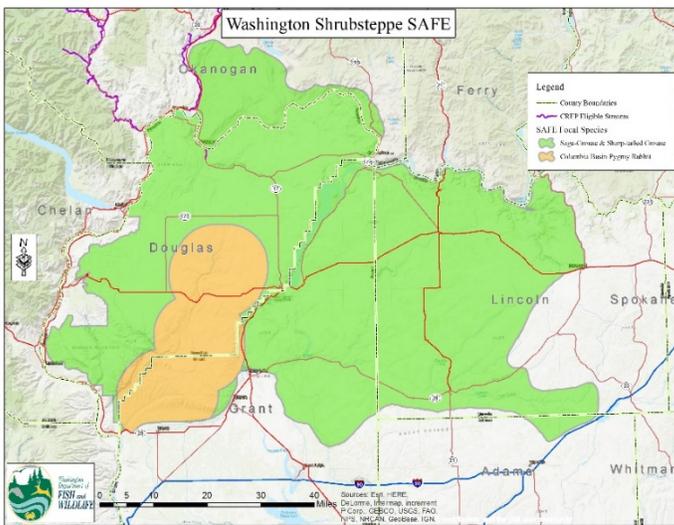
Columbian sharp-tailed grouse. Eric M. Braaten – WDFW Photo.

Washington Shrubsteppe CRP SAFE – December 2020

Eligible Land

Agricultural land that was cropped or considered cropped four out of six years from 2012 to 2017 is eligible for both approved SAFE practices. Summer fallow and CRP are considered cropped. Marginal pasture land is eligible for the CP38A-22 practice.

Washington Shrubsteppe SAFE Initiative is available in portions of the following counties: Adams, Douglas, Grant, Lincoln, and Okanogan.



Cover Requirements

Landowners entering into a SAFE contract are required to provide specific wildlife seed mixes for food and cover. This can be re-enrolled CRP acreage meeting SAFE habitat requirements or land planted to meet SAFE requirements. A list of seed mixes is available from FSA or WDFW. Weed control is required on SAFE acreage.

Re-enrolled CRP land must have a minimum of 60% total cover (combination of forbs, shrubs and perennial grasses) and no more than 25% total cover of crested or Siberian wheatgrass. It must have a minimum presence of 5 total species: 3 perennial grasses, 1 forb and 1 shrub.

New cover plantings must have a minimum of 7 total species: 3 grasses, 3 forbs (1 may be introduced) and 1 shrub.

Riparian forest buffers must be planted to native trees and shrubs suitable to the site. Grasses will also be included if necessary. Native grasses will be used if available, or comparable introduced grasses if natives are not available. The average minimum buffer width is 50 feet and the maximum is 180 feet.

Financial Benefits:

- 10-15 years of annual rental payments;
- Payments of up to 50% cost-share for practice establishment;
- Practices eligible for Continuous CRP Signup may also receive:
 - A 20% Practice Incentive Payment (PIP); and
 - Sign-up Incentive Payment (SIP) to equal 32.5% of first full year's annual rental payment.

Other Considerations:

- Management activities are required but no cost-share will be provided.

More Information

For more information, contact your local service center and USDA Farm Service Agency office at farmers.gov/service-center-locator, or the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife private lands biologist for your area at wdfw.wa.gov.



Columbia Basin pygmy rabbit. Jon Gallie – WDFW Photo.