

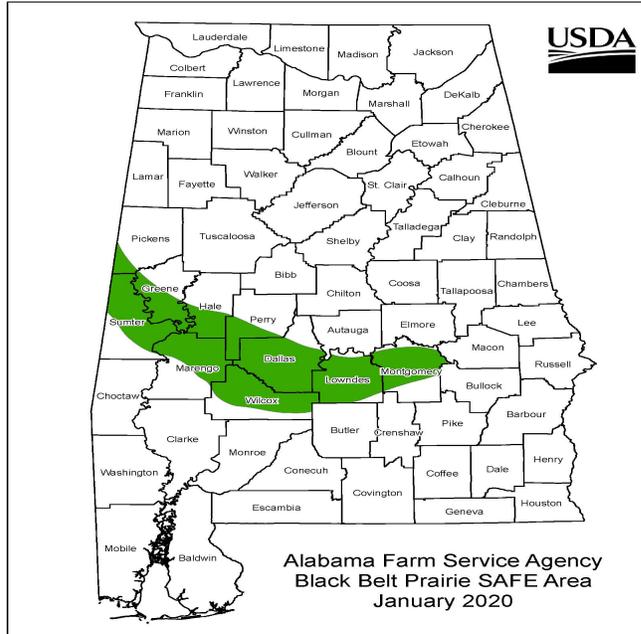


United States
Department of
Agriculture

June 2020

Conservation Reserve Program Alabama State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) Black Belt Prairie Restoration

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is offering a Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) initiative to improve through restoration, native grassland habitats for rare, threatened, endangered, and declining species that are dependent on native prairie communities found within the Black Belt Prairie region of Mississippi. This SAFE initiative will assist to design, install, and maintain native grassland habitats in Alabama. A similar initiative is available in Mississippi.



Enrollment

Producers will have the opportunity to offer land for CRP SAFE, Black Belt Prairie Restoration, under general enrollment signup periods. Offers will be ranked according to the Environmental Benefits Index (EBI). Offers devoted to a SAFE approved practice will receive an additional 20 points to their N1b score as a Wildlife Enhancement.

Eligible Land and Practices

To be eligible for this practice, land must be located in counties within the Black Belt Prairie Restoration area. In addition, land must meet the basic CRP eligibility requirements.

Eligible Land and Practices Continued

Acceptable land is cropland that was planted or considered planted to an agricultural commodity in four out of six years that will be determined by the national office when the general signup period is announced and which is also physically and legally capable of being planted in a normal manner to an agricultural commodity.

Rental Rates

Rental rates are based on three predominant soils on land offered for enrollment. FSA bases rental rates on the relative productivity of the soils within each county and the average cash rent using data provided by the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS).

Cost-share Payments

FSA will pay up to 50 percent of the eligible cost of establishing a permanent native grassland cover.

Contracts

The effective date of the CRP contract will be October 1 of the year the CRP contract is approved.

Contracts must be more than 10 years and less than 15 years.

Cooperating Agencies

CRP is administered by USDA's FSA with assistance from USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Technical Requirements for CRP CP38E, SAFE Habitat

CP25: The planting mixes will comply with the eFOTG specification for 643, Restoration of Rare and Declining Habitats. Mixed stand of at least four native grass species, four native forb and legume species, and one native shrub species will be required. Total grass seeding density not less than 4 lbs. PLS/ac and not to exceed 6 lbs. PLS/ac. Total forb seeding density not less than 2 lbs. PLS/ac and not to exceed 3 lbs. PLS/ac with no species comprising >50% of the mixture. Acceptable grass species include, but are not limited to, big bluestem, little bluestem, indiagrass, switchgrass, eastern gamagrass, and sideoats grama. Acceptable forb and legume species include, but are not limited to, black-eyed Susan, butterfly milkweed, false sunflower, grey headed coneflower, Illinois bundleflower, lance leaved coreopsis, partridge pea, prairie dock, purple coneflower, purple prairie clover, rough blazing star, spiked blazing star, tall coreopsis, and white prairie clover. Shrubs will be planted in patches or clumps approximately 30'x30' with seedlings planted on 5'x5' spacing within the clumps. Acceptable shrub species include, but are not limited to, Chickasaw plum.

Mid Contract management is required on CP-38E Enrolled Acres. Mowing of any fields enrolled in CP38E will not be allowed as a management practice. Exceptions will be made to allow mowing during vegetation establishment to control undesirable weed competition if necessary. Mowing may also be allowed as needed to prepare sites for necessary herbicide applications or prescribed fire.

Prescribed Burning: Conduct prescribed burns on CP-38E enrolled acreage on the following schedule:
1st burn: Feb.-March (years 2-5) 2nd burn: Feb.-March (years 5-8) 3rd burn: Oct.-March (years 8-11)

Light Disking: May be allowed on a rotational basis if specified in the conservation plan.

Cooperating Agencies for the Conservation Reserve Program, State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE), CP38E Black Belt Prairie Restoration Project

