

Washington Fact Sheet

State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) WA Sage Grouse & Sharp-tailed Grouse

Updated – May 2017

Overview

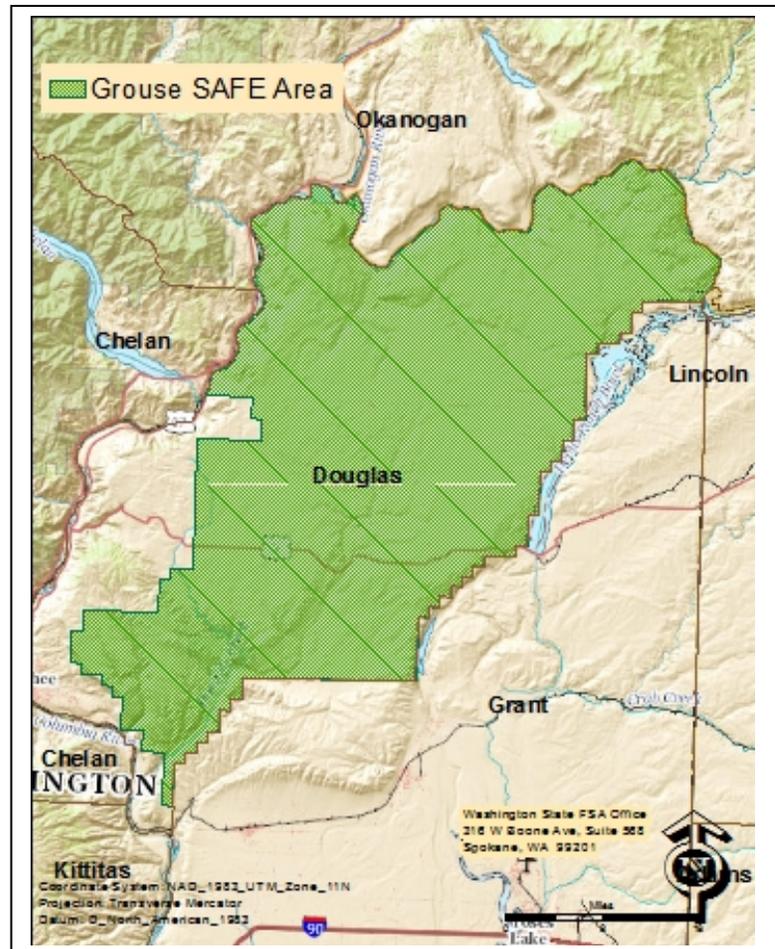
The Washington Sage Grouse and Sharp-tailed Grouse State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) is a special initiative of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Like traditional CRP, SAFE is a voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to eligible land owners and operators to address priority natural resource concerns. SAFE, however, gives special consideration to wildlife. The initiative is a state and federal partnership between the Farm Service Agency (FSA) and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

The goal of the Washington Sage Grouse and Sharp-tailed Grouse SAFE is to enroll 78,000 acres to benefit native prairie grouse and other shrub-steppe wildlife species that have declined because of ongoing habitat loss and fragmentation throughout the West.

Cooperating landowners receive rental payments, establishment and maintenance cost-share and incentive payments in return for entering a contract to provide specific wildlife habitat.

Land Eligibility

Land with a cropping history and within the project area in Douglas County is eligible for SAFE enrollment. Land must have been cropped at least four years between 2008 – 2013 to



Washington Sage Grouse and Sharp-tailed Grouse Project SAFE

have a cropping history. Summer fallow, CRP and crops in rotation are considered cropped.

Payments

Landowners who voluntarily agree to 10 to 15-year contracts will receive the following payments:

- Signing Incentive Payment – a one-time payment of \$75 per acre for land not previously enrolled in CRP
- Practice Incentive - 90 reimbursement (50% cost share plus 40% practice incentive payment) of the eligible costs to install conservation practices
- Annual rental payment - based on the weighted

average soil rental rate for the soils in the offered acreage.

SAFE contracts begin the first of the month following FSA approval of the contract. For example, if a contract is approved June 15, it will become effective and annual rental payments will begin to accrue on July 1.

Payment Limitation

Annual rental payments, including the incentives, are subject to a payment limitation of \$50,000 per person, per year. The limit applies collectively to all CRP contracts the producer has throughout the U.S. There is no limit on the cost-share payments.

Contract 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.

Approved conservation practices include:

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. 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. Only native trees and shrubs will be used. The average minimum buffer width is 50 feet and the maximum is 180 feet.

Technical assistance to develop a conservation plan will be provided by Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife.

The SAFE contract will be approved after all required documents are completed and signed, including:

- SAFE worksheet
- SAFE contract
- Conservation plan
- Landlord/tenant certification
- Payment limitation forms
- Conservation compliance form
- FSA acreage measurement (a small fee applies).

Access

Public access to land enrolled in the SAFE program **is not required** and will be at the landowner's discretion.

Sign-Up Process

Landowners wishing to participate in the SAFE program may apply at their local Farm Service Agency office. Applications are accepted year-round. It is a non-competitive sign-up process, unlike regular CRP. After an application is submitted, a no-obligation eligibility review will be conducted and landowners are provided a final opportunity to decide whether to enroll land in the program.

Additional Information

For more information about SAFE, contact your local USDA Service Center or Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) biologist. Also, visit the FSA website at <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/wa> or the WDFW website at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/>.

Douglas County

North of Hwy 2: Eric Braaten, WDFW (509) 664-0848
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This fact sheet is a summary of the State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) program and is not intended to cover all situations or program provisions.