

# New York Grassland Bird Habitat Conservation and Management SAFE

## State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE)



### Overview

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) are partners in implementing a State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) project to enroll agricultural land in thirty-six counties across New York. The purpose of the New York Grassland Habitat SAFE is to benefit grassland birds by conserving and managing sufficient grassland habitat in key areas of the state that will contribute towards the overall goal of preventing the extirpation of the target species in New York.

### 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 New York Grassland Habitat SAFE project is to provide habitat for bobolink, Eastern meadowlark, savannah sparrow, Northern harrier, and short-eared owl. These wildlife species are important to New York because grassland habitat expansion or creation can foster an increase in their productivity and overall populations and has the potential to encourage populations of more rare species to colonize enrolled fields. Secondarily, this habitat can serve as overwintering habitat for other species such as northern harriers and the state endangered short

eared owl. These management opportunities can maintain existing populations, foster their expansion and increased productivity, and decrease the likelihood of extirpation on the landscape.

### Habitat

Landowners and agricultural producers participating in New York Grassland Habitat 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 bobolink, Eastern meadowlark, savannah sparrow, Northern harrier, and short-eared owl. The habitat being established is post-agricultural introduced grass fields (CP-1) or native permanent grass fields (CP-2). After the habitat is established, it will need to be maintained and managed by mowing established grasses and forbs on a specific rotation after August 15th to account for the primary nesting season, and spot mowing as necessary to keep invasives under control which will provide nesting, brood-rearing, foraging, and overwintering habitat for the target species. Proper habitat establishment, maintenance, and management will maximize benefits for bobolink, Eastern meadowlark, savannah sparrow, Northern harrier, and short-eared owl.



## Project Location

The New York Grassland Habitat SAFE project location is within the Western New York, Southern Tier, Finger Lakes Region, Mohawk River Valley, St. Lawrence River Valley, Washington County Grasslands, and Shawangunk Grasslands regions which completely or partially encompass Allegany, Cayuga, Chemung, Clinton, Cortland, Erie, Essex, Franklin, Fulton, Genesee, Herkimer, Jefferson, Livingston, Madison, Monroe, Montgomery, Niagara, Oneida, Onondaga, Ontario, Orleans, Otsego, Saratoga, Schoharie, Schuyler, Seneca, St. Lawrence, Steuben, Suffolk, Tompkins, Ulster, Washington, Warren, Wayne, Wyoming and Yates counties.

## Eligible CRP Practices

This SAFE project uses the following CRP practices:

- ◆ CP38E-CP-1: Establishment fo Permanent Introduced Grasses and Legumes.
- ◆ CP38E-CP-2: Establishment fo Permanent Native Grasses

## Haying and Grazing

After August 15th, the removal of vegetation to reduce thatch accumulation is periodically required as a management activity in individual Site Conservation Plans. The sale of baled hay is allowed according to CRP policy, provided the hay was harvested after August 15 and in compliance with the SAFE conservation plan. Low intensity grazing, no more than 1.5 Animal Equivalency Units per acre

is allowed during the nesting season. Livestock must not be moved around the fields with dogs, loud sounds, or any other technique that would disturb nesting grassland birds. High-intensity rotational grazing is not allowed during the nesting season but can occur after the nesting season provided that the cover is not destroyed. All haying and grazing for required management will follow CRP non-emergency haying and grazing policy including payment reductions when required.

## 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

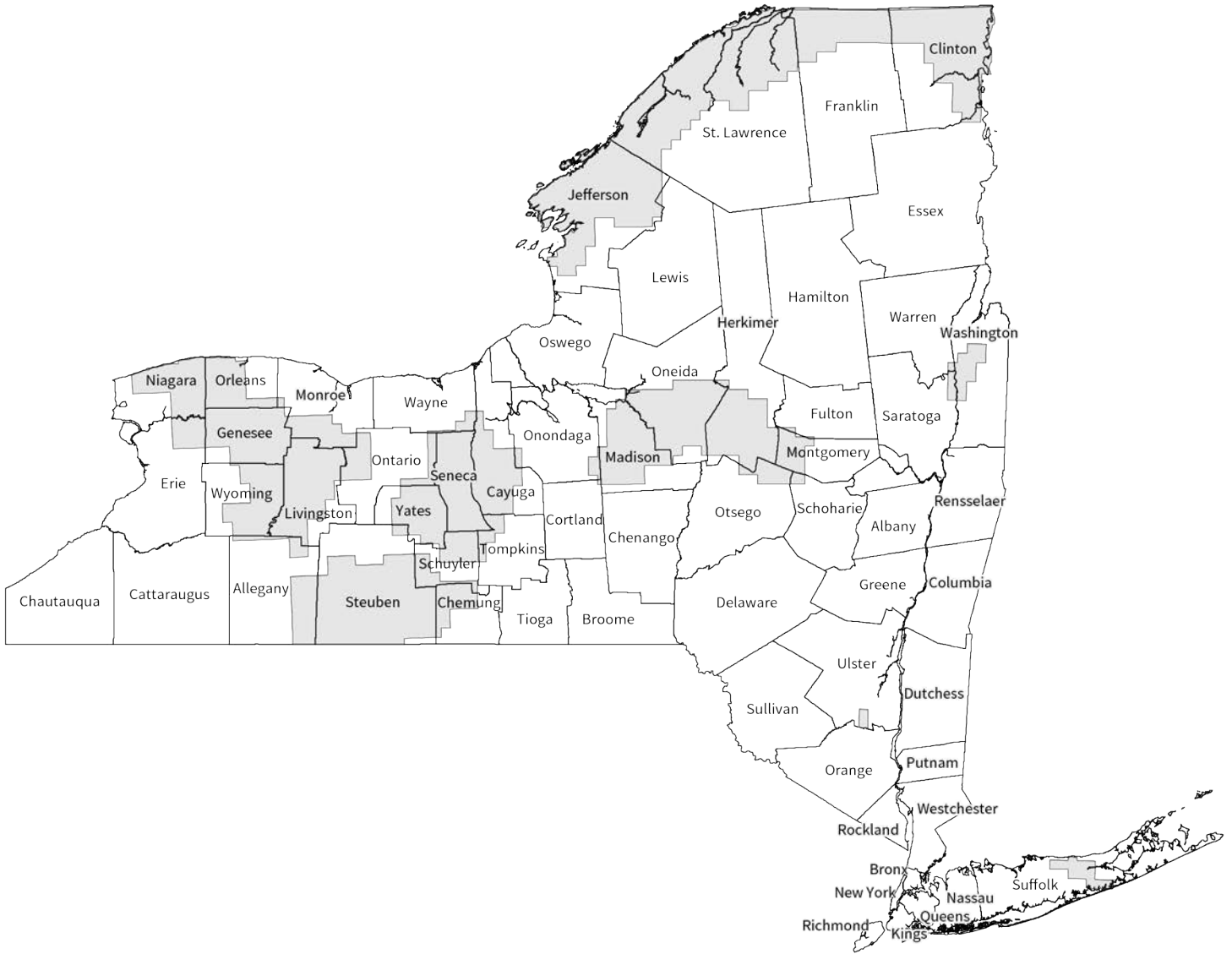
In exchange for participation in CRP SAFE, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) provides participants with annual per acre rental payments, cost-share to assist with habitat establishment expenses, and in some cases additional monetary incentives.

## 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](https://farmers.gov/service-locator).



# New York Grassland Bird Habitat Conservation and Management SAFE Project Map



## Legend

FSA County Boundary

New York Grassland Bird Habitat Conservation and Management SAFE Project Area