

New Mexico Lesser Prairie-Chicken Habitat SAFE

State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE)



Overview

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF) are partners in implementing a State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) project to enroll agricultural land in two counties, Lea and Roosevelt Counties, Southeast New Mexico. The purpose of the New Mexico Lesser Prairie-Chicken Habitat SAFE is to restore habitat for the Lesser Prairie-Chicken species.

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 Mexico Lesser Prairie-Chicken Habitat SAFE project is to provide habitat for Lesser Prairie-Chicken. The Lesser Prairie-Chicken in New Mexico is vulnerable because of its limited range and small population size and listed as endangered under the Endangered Species Act.

Habitat

HabitatLandowners and agricultural producers participating in New Mexico Lesser Prairie-Chicken Habitat SAFE are required to develop a conservation plan with assistance from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) or a technical service provider (TSP). The conservation plan will provide details on how to restore and sustain sand sagebrush and shinnery oak grasslands providing breeding and brood rearing habitat for Lesser Prairie-Chickens. After the habitat is established, it will need to be maintained and managed by conducting two management activities during the contract period. For a 10-year contract, activities would take place between years 4-7. To meet the two management activity requirements, participants can do the same management practice twice or they could do one management practice during the beginning of the contract and a different management practice during the middle of the contract. Management activities will be determined by the producer, NRCS or NMDGF wildlife biologist and will be applied according to a conservation plan. Management activities include inter-seeding, prescribed burning, mowing, disking, and prescribed grazing. Proper habitat establishment, maintenance, and management will maximize benefits for Lesser Prairie-Chickens.



Photo by Grant Beauprez, New Mexico Dept. of Game and Fish

Project Location

The New Mexico Lesser Prairie-Chicken Habitat SAFE project location is Lea and Roosevelt Counties.

Eligible CRP Practices

This SAFE project uses the following CRP practices:

- ◆ CP38E-1, Introduced Grasses and Legumes
- ◆ CP38E-2, Native Grasses and Legumes
- ◆ CP38E-4D, Permanent Wildlife Habitat
- ◆ CP38E-25, Rare and Declining Habitat (primarily grasses)

Haying and Grazing

Grazing may be permitted on no more than 75 percent of the acreage or at a 75 percent stocking rate on the total acreage for not more than 90 days. Stocking rate and grazing duration may be further restricted by the approved conservation plan to maintain acceptable cover as determined by NRCS or TSP.

Non-emergency and emergency haying is not authorized. Non-emergency and emergency grazing may be permitted according to an approved conservation plan developed by NRCS or TSP. Grazing during the Primary Nesting Season (PNS) is not authorized.

Eligibility Requirements

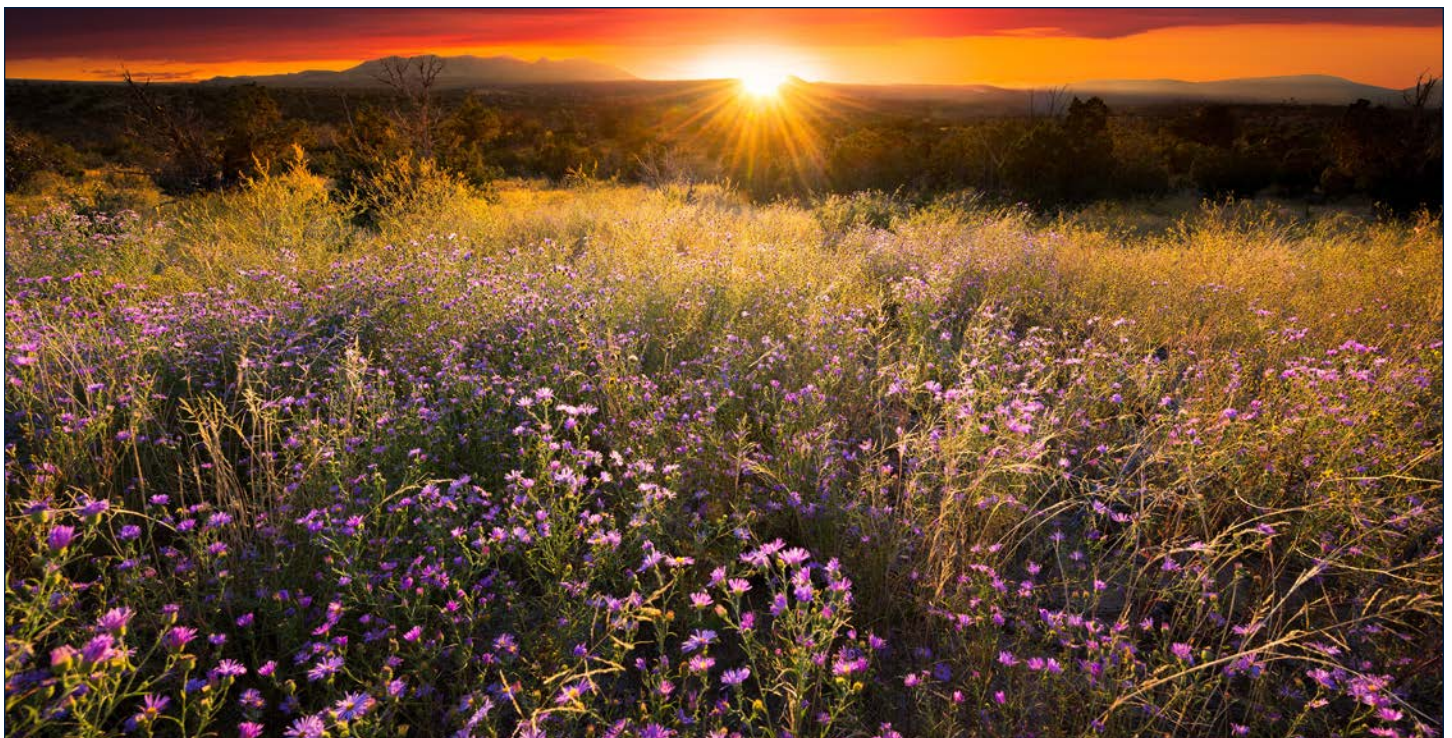
Because SAFE is part of CRP, certain land and participant eligibility rules apply. To begin with, land must be in the project area and meet cropping history. CRP participant eligibility rules also apply to SAFE.

Payments and Incentives

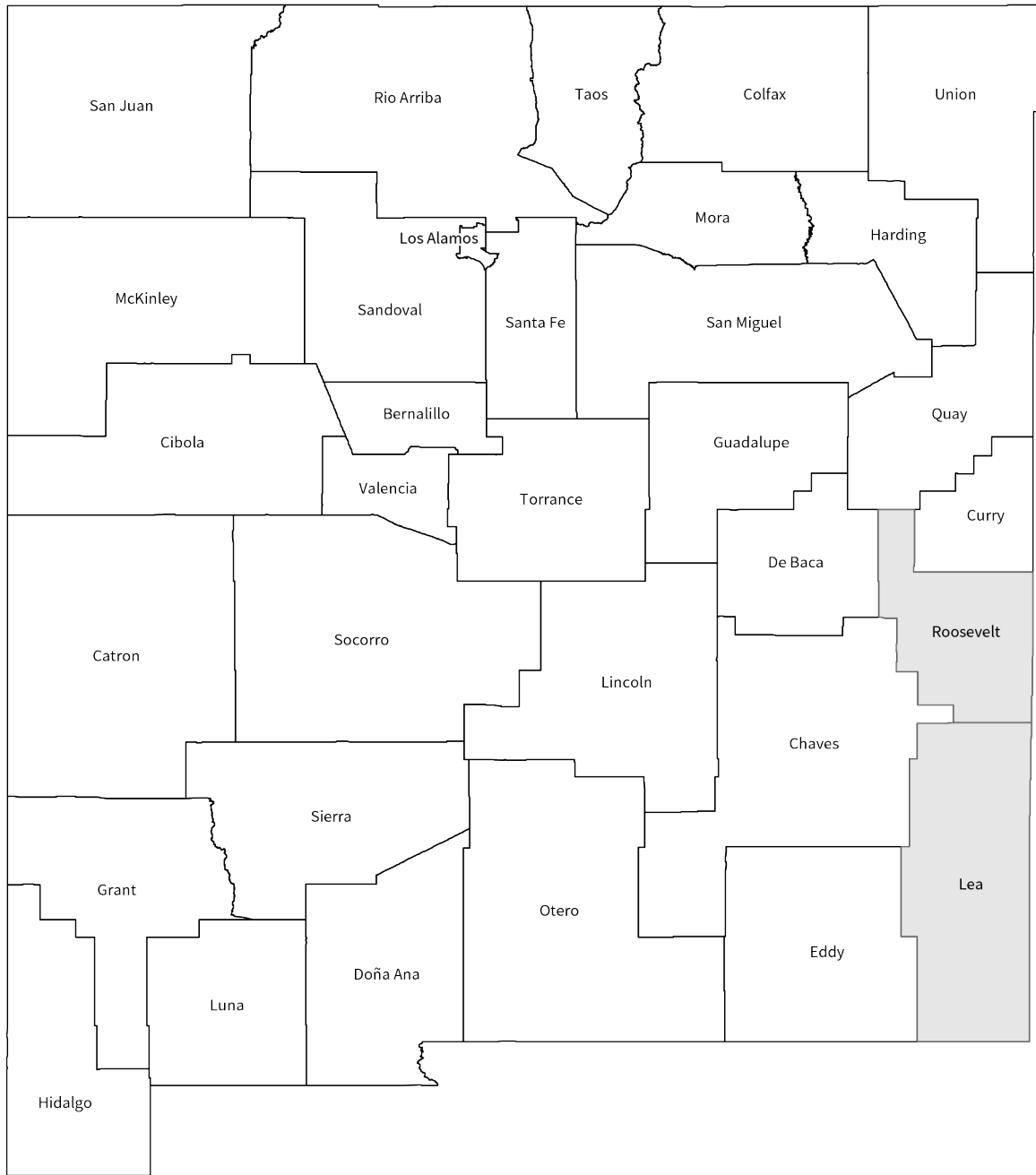
In exchange for participation in CRP SAFE, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) provides participants with annual per acre rental payments, cost-share to assist with habitat establishment expenses, and in some cases additional monetary incentives.

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.



New Mexico Lesser Prairie-Chicken Habitat SAFE Project Map



Legend

-  FSA County Boundary
-  New Mexico Lesser Prairie Chicken Habitat SAFE Project Area