

# Gaining Ground for Wildlife

SAFE - State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement



*If you miss the morning melody of a meadow lark, the crow of a pheasant, the bubbling song of a bobolink or the darting flight of a dickcissel, there may be something you can do about it.*

## Description and Benefits

If you have cropland or expiring CRP... If you miss the morning melody of a meadow lark, the crow of a pheasant, the bubbling song of a bobolink or the darting flight of a dickcissel, there may be something you can do about it. There's a new initiative, State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE),<sup>1</sup> for Iowa landowners who want to bring back songbirds, upland game birds and waterfowl – Gaining Ground for Wildlife.

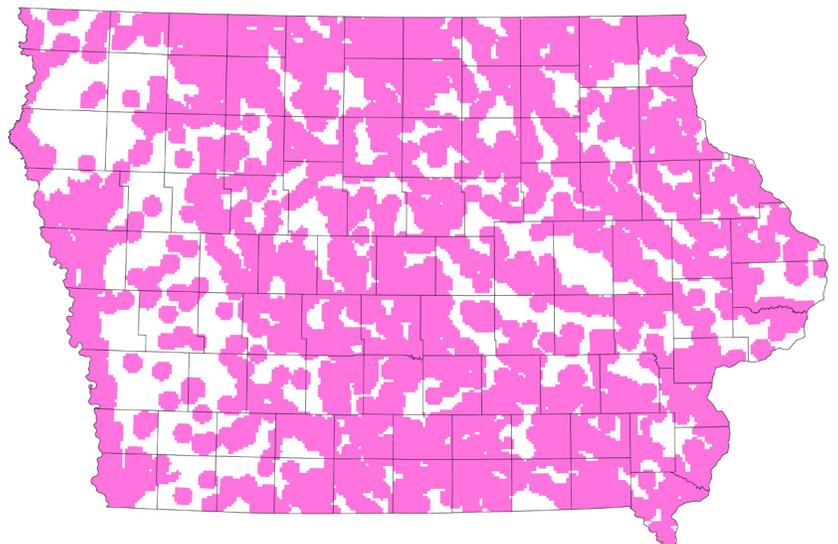
The Gaining Ground for Wildlife initiative makes available a new continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) practice. It's designed to restore native grasslands and wetlands where they will be the most beneficial for wildlife species. It's specifically designed to increase populations of ring-necked pheasants, dickcissel, bobolink and eastern meadowlarks where their preferred habitats have been eliminated. As prairies and wetlands replace corn and soybean fields, these upland and wetland birds will have the nesting, brooding and winter cover needed to help sustain their populations.

The practice is available in all but two counties near existing protected habitats. These areas are eligible and have a high priority, because wildlife species benefit most when there are large expanses of grasslands or wetlands.

Eligible producers can sign up at their local USDA Farm Service Agency. However, the sign-up is limited to "first-come; first-served." The sign-up will end when all acres are under contract.

## Eligible Counties

All areas shown in pink on the map are eligible for *Gaining Ground for Wildlife* CRP sign-up. Enrollment in *Gaining Ground for Wildlife* CRP is limited to areas within three miles of priority wildlife habitats.



# Eligible Practices

Establish native grasses, restore wetlands and develop food plots.

## Purpose

- Increase populations of ring-necked pheasant, dickcissel, bobolink and eastern meadowlarks
- Benefit high value wildlife species
- Benefit threatened or endangered species, or those with a significant decline
- Improve, connect or create high quality grassland and wetland habitat
- Provide nesting, brood and winter cover
- Provide habitat for beneficial insects
- Benefit reptiles and amphibians
- Improve water quality
- Reduce erosion

## Payments

### Rental Rate

- Based on maximum soil rental rate established for the three predominant soils, plus, an annual maintenance payment
- 10- to 15-year contract length

### Cost-share

- Standard FSA 50 percent cost-share, plus 40 percent practice incentive payment to establish the practice
- Sign-up bonus payment of an additional \$75 per acre

## Eligibility

- Land that was cropped or considered cropped four out of the six years from 2008 to 2013
- Eligible cropland includes row crops, small grains and forage crops

## Seeding Sources

The Iowa DNR recommends planting native Iowa prairie seed types. These grasses and wildflowers are suitable for Iowa's weather and growing conditions. Plant materials can be purchased at local nurseries and seed dealers.

## More Information

<http://www.iowadnr.gov/crp>

## Partners

Iowa DNR, Iowa Farm Service Agency, Iowa Natural Resources Conservation Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Pheasants Forever, Ducks Unlimited, The Nature Conservancy, Iowa Audubon Society, Iowa Department of Agriculture - Division of Land Stewardship, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, Conservation Districts of Iowa, Iowa County Conservation Boards



1. State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) is a new nationwide Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) with continuous sign-up. The SAFE initiative allows public and private organizations and state and federal agencies to propose areas where new CRP acreage is essential to benefit endangered, threatened or high priority fish and wildlife species.