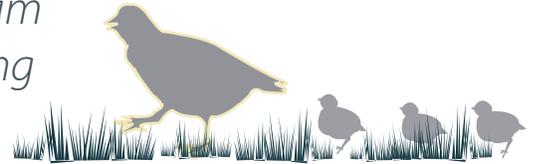


Grand River Grassland CRP

SAFE - State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement

If you miss the whistle of a bobwhite or you love the booming of a prairie chicken, there's a new Conservation Reserve Program initiative that can help you restore habitat and bring back these grassland birds in Ringgold County



Description and Benefits

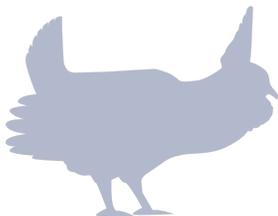
If you have cropland or expiring CRP in the southeast part of Ringgold County... If you miss the morning melody of a meadow lark, the whistle of a bobwhite quail, the bubbling song of a bobolink or the darting flight of a dickcissel... If you would like to see the greater prairie chicken nesting on your land... There is a way for you to return these grassland birds to your property. There's a new initiative, State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE)¹. It is for Ringgold County landowners who want to bring back songbirds, quail and prairie chickens – the Grand River Grassland initiative.

The Grand River Grassland initiative makes available a new continuous Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) practice. It is designed to restore high quality native grasslands for wildlife. It's specifically designed to increase populations of the northern bobwhite quail, greater prairie chicken, dickcissel, bobolink and eastern meadowlark. As prairie grasses replace crop fields and brome grass, these upland birds will have the nesting, brooding and winter cover needed to increase their populations.

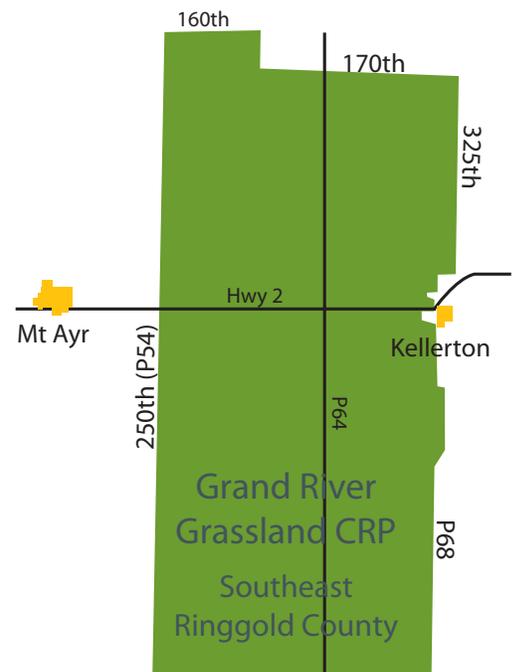
The practice is available in southeast Ringgold County within the boundaries of the Kellerton Bird Conservation Area. The core area of this Bird Conservation Area has a significant amount of public land and contains two of the five greater prairie chicken breeding areas in Iowa. Private landowners can enhance expiring CRP or convert cropland to grassland to benefit these rare or declining birds. The soils do not have to be highly erodible to qualify for the program.

Starting in May, 2008, eligible producers can sign up at their local USDA Farm Service Agency. However, the sign-up is limited to 4,500 acres. The sign-up will end when all acres are under contract.

Eligible Area



Land within the Kellerton Bird Conservation Area is eligible for the *Grand River Grasslands* continuous CRP sign-up. Landowners in other parts of the state may be eligible for other SAFE CRP contracts¹.



Eligible Practices

Establish native grasses in cropland or expiring CRP contracts.

Purpose

- Increase populations of northern bobwhite quail, greater prairie chicken, dickcissel, bobolink and eastern meadowlarks
- Benefit high value, rare or declining wildlife species
- Improve, connect or create high quality grassland habitat
- Provide nesting, brood and winter cover
- Provide habitat for birds, mammals, reptiles and amphibians
- Improve water quality and reduce erosion
- Increase economic benefit to the county from visitors for prairie chicken viewing and quail hunting

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 \$100 per acre

Eligibility

- Land that was cropped or considered cropped four out of the six years from 1996 to 2001
- Eligible cropland includes row crops, small grains and forage crops; and expiring CRP contracts

Seeding Sources

A mix of shorter native grasses and wildflowers is required. The Iowa DNR recommends planting Iowa native prairie seed types which 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/wildlife/privatelands/index.html>

Partners

Iowa DNR, Iowa Farm Service Agency, Iowa Natural Resources Conservation Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Pheasants Forever, The Nature Conservancy, Iowa Audubon Society, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, Ringgold County Conservation Board, Ringgold County Soil and Water Conservation District.



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. There are three SAFE CRP areas in Iowa:

- Gaining Ground for Wildlife proposed by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources to establish grassland/wetland habitat statewide,
- Grand River Grasslands proposed by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources in Ringgold County, and
- Habitat for Early Successional and Neotropical Migratory Forest Birds proposed by the Conservation Districts of Iowa in Clayton and Allamakee Counties.