



IOWA GAINING GROUND

STATE ACRES FOR WILDLIFE ENHANCEMENT

If you miss the morning melody of a meadowlark, the bouncing call of a grasshopper sparrow, the bubbling song of a bobolink or the darting flight of a thrasher, there may be something you can do about it.

DESCRIPTION & BENEFITS

If you have eligible cropland or an expiring Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) contract, there's a new initiative available within Iowa. The *Gaining Ground* State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE)¹ is for Iowa landowners who want to bring back grassland songbirds.

The *Gaining Ground for Wildlife* SAFE initiative makes available new CRP practices. It's designed to restore native grasslands (CP38E) where they will be the most beneficial for grassland songbirds. It's specifically designed to increase populations of Bobolink, Brown Thrasher, Grasshopper Sparrow, Loggerhead Shrike, and Western Meadowlark where their preferred habitats have been eliminated. As prairies and grasslands replace corn and soybean fields, these grassland birds will have the nesting and brood-rearing cover needed to help recover their populations.

The practice is available most counties near existing protected wildlife 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](#).



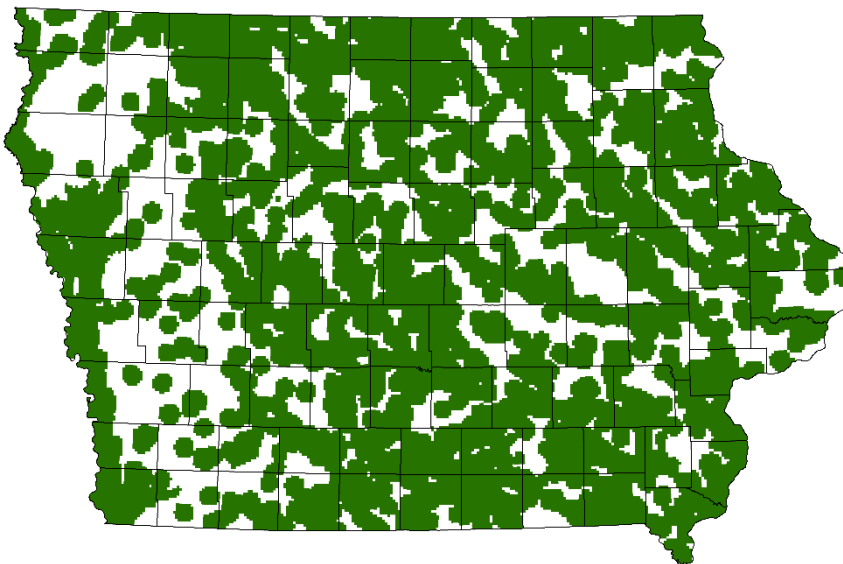
Male Bobolink on stalk of Butterfly Milkweed.

ELIGIBLE COUNTIES

All areas shown in green on the map are eligible for *Gaining Ground for Wildlife* CRP sign-up.

Enrollment in *Gaining Ground for Wildlife* CRP practice is limited to areas within three miles of protected public land wildlife habitats.

Landowners in non-shaded areas may be eligible for other SAFE¹ CRP contracts.



PRACTICE REQUIREMENTS

Offers will establish native grasses and forbs within 3 miles of existing wildlife areas. Offers must be a minimum of 10 acres unless adjacent to a wildlife area. All enrolled offers will provide at least 2 of the following native grass seedings – tall grass/low forbs, tall grass/high forbs, short grass/low forbs or short grass/high forbs. More diversity is encouraged especially for native pollinators and Monarchs. Winter cover, food plots and shrub planting are allowed but not required.

PURPOSE

- Increase populations of grassland songbirds in significant decline
- Provide nesting, brood and migratory cover
- Improve, connect or create high quality grassland and wetland habitat
- Benefit reptiles, amphibians, and other upland nesting birds
- Provide habitat for beneficial pollinators
- Improve water quality and reduce erosion

PAYMENTS

Rental Rate

- Based on maximum soil rental rate established for the three predominant soils
- 10 to 15-year contract length

Cost-share

- 50 percent cost-share to establish practice

ELIGIBILITY

- Land that was cropped or considered cropped four out of the six years from 2012 to 2017.
- Eligible cropland includes row crops, small grains and forage crops grown in an acceptable rotation

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

www.fsa.usda.gov/ia

www.iowadnr.gov/crp

PARTNERS

Iowa Department of Natural Resources, USDA - Iowa Farm Service Agency, USDA - 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 and Iowa County Conservation Boards.



State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) is a nationwide Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) practice within the 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 four other SAFE CRP projects in Iowa, visit the Iowa DNR's website for more information on other SAFE projects.

