



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

# GRAND RIVER GRASSLAND

## STATE ACRES FOR WILDLIFE ENHANCEMENT

*If you love the booming of a prairie chicken, or like darting bobolinks, there is a new initiative that can help you restore habitat and bring back these grassland birds in Ringgold County*

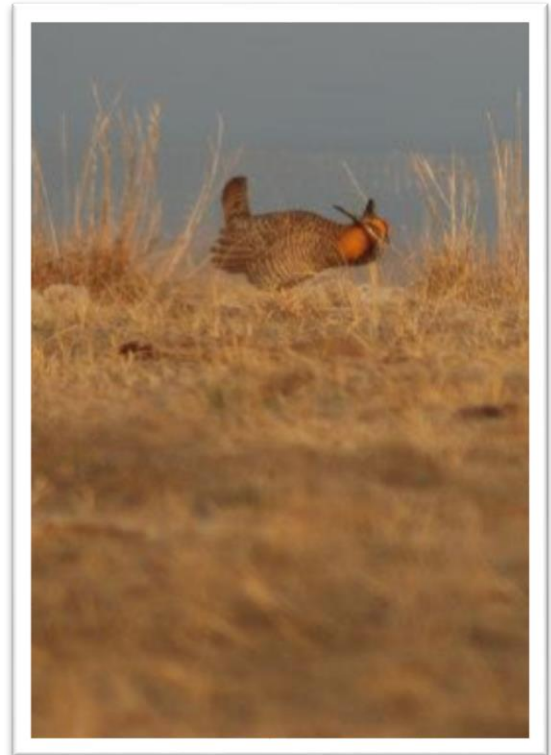
### DESCRIPTION & BENEFITS

If you have eligible cropland or expiring Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) in the eastern part of Ringgold County, there's a new initiative, State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE)<sup>1</sup> available to you.

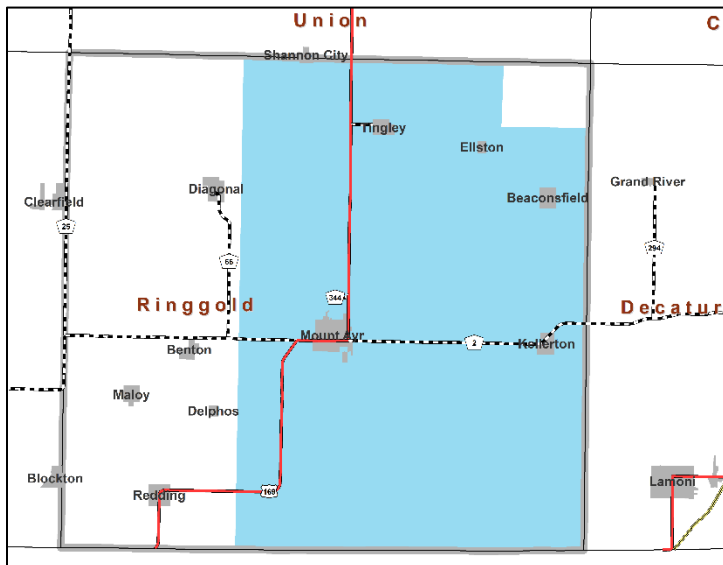
The *Grand River Grassland initiative* makes available a new general CRP practice. It's specifically designed to increase populations of the greater prairie chicken, dickcissel, bobolink, grasshopper sparrow and eastern meadowlark. As prairie grasses replace crop fields and brome grass, these grassland birds will have the nesting, brooding and winter cover needed to increase their populations.

The practice is available in eastern Ringgold County and includes 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 eligible cropland to grassland to benefit these rare and declining birds.

Starting with the next general CRP sign-up announcement, eligible producers can sign up at their local [USDA Farm Service Agency](#).



*Greater Prairie Chickens need short grasslands.*



### ELIGIBLE AREA

All areas highlighted in blue on the map, within Ringgold County, are eligible for *Grand River Grassland* general CRP sign-up.

Enrollment in *Grand River Grassland* CRP practice is limited to areas within Ringgold County with the best potential to benefit greater prairie chickens with the addition of short grass habitats.

Landowners in non-shaded areas may be eligible for other SAFE<sup>1</sup> CRP contracts.

## PRACTICE REQUIREMENTS

All offers enrolled will establish short native grasses and wildflowers planted as a mix with a minimum of four grass and six wildflower species, more diversity is encouraged. Native wildflowers will have a growth form of less than twenty inches in height. Legumes will be fifty percent of the wildflower mix. Preferred management for prairie chickens is grazing, but disking and burning will be allowed. Shrub plantings and winter grain food plots will be allowed, but not required.

## PURPOSE

- Increase populations of greater prairie chicken, and other grassland songbirds
- Provide nesting, brood and winter cover
- Benefit threatened species, or those with a significant decline
- Improve, connect or create high quality short grass habitat
- 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

1. *State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) is a nationwide Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) practice within the general 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.*

## 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 with EI  $\geq$  8; any cropland located within a State Conservation Priority Area; and expiring CRP contracts.

## SEEDING SOURCES

A mix of shorter native grasses and wildflowers is required. 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](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/ia)

[www.iowadnr.gov/crp](http://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, The Nature Conservancy, Iowa Audubon Society, Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, Ringgold Count Soil and Water Conservation District and Ringgold County Conservation Board.

