

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) offers a Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) to enhance high priority wildlife habitat in 14 North Carolina counties. The SAFE Habitat Initiative will assist to design, install and maintain of up to 5,600 acres of early successional habitat.

**NORTH CAROLINA
CRP SAFE Habitat Initiative Focal Area**



Sign-up

Sign-up at local FSA offices for the CRP SAFE Habitat Initiative which runs continuously until the acreage goal is met.

Eligible Land and Practices

To be eligible for this practice, land must be located in counties within the SAFE Habitat Initiative focal area. In addition, land must meet the basic CRP eligibility requirements.

Acceptable land is cropland that was planted or considered planted to an agricultural commodity in four out of six years between 2002 and 2007 and which is also physically and legally capable of being planted in a normal manner to an agricultural commodity.

Rental Rates

Rental rates are based on three predominant soils on land offered for enrollment. FSA bases rental rates on the average value of dry-land cash rent and adjusts rates to reflect the relative productivity of soils within each county.

SIP and PIP Payments

A one-time up front signing incentive payment (SIP) of \$100 per acre for CRP contracts for 10 or more years will be paid by FSA after eligibility criteria are met and the CRP contract is approved.

A one-time practice incentive payment (PIP) equal to 40 percent of the eligible installation costs will be paid after the CRP practice is installed, eligible costs are verified and other payment eligibility criteria are met.

Cost-share Payments

In addition to the payments described, FSA will pay up to 50 percent of the eligible cost of establishing a permanent cover.

Contracts

The effective date of the CRP contract is the first day of the month following the month of approval. In certain circumstances, producers may defer the effective date for up to six months.

Contracts are for not less than 10, nor more than 15 years.

Cooperating Agencies

CRP is administered by USDA's FSA with assistance from USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); NCWRC; and local soil and water conservation districts.

Technical Requirements for CRP CP38E, SAFE Habitat

This practice will establish and maintain native early successional habitat on cropland to benefit specific bird species. These bird species are: Northern Bobwhite Quail, Grasshopper Sparrow, Eastern Meadowlark, Loggerhead Shrike and Eastern Kingbird.

Habitat establishment will require planting 2 species of native warm season grasses, 2 species of native forbs and managing for natural vegetation diversity.

Required mid-contract management will include prescribed burning, light disking and spot spraying on rotation to control woody vegetation.

Establishment of native mast producing shrubs will be allowed when needed to meet habitat requirements.

Food plots are allowed on a portion of the contracted acres not to exceed 10% of enrolled acres. Individual plots must maintain footprint throughout the life of the contract and be 5 acres or less in size.

Mowing and hay production are prohibited on enrolled acres during the life of the contract.

Considerations in Establishing and Maintaining Early Successional Habitat

Site specific actions, as applicable, will be indicated in the conservation plan

1. Site Preparation is paramount. Addressing all weed concerns with chemical or mechanical means prior to planting will improve stand establishment.
2. Native Warm Season Grasses (NWSG) are bunch forming grasses which offer excellent wildlife habitat.
3. NWSG may be established by either conventional or no-till methods. Several native grasses have a fluffy seed structure which requires a special drill for planting.
4. Proper planting depth is vital. Grasses such as Big bluestem, Little bluestem, Indiangrass and switchgrass should be drilled $\frac{1}{4}$ " or less. Conventional seeding should utilize a culti-packer to press broadcasted seed into a prepared but firm seedbed.
5. Patience is required when establishing NWSG. Those grasses have extensive root systems which develop during the first two years after planting. During establishment years a limited amount of leaf growth may occur. Keep weeds from shading native grass seedlings too much.
6. Naturally occurring plants such as Ragweed, Goldenrod, Pokeweed Blackberry and Broomsedge will colonize some establishment areas. Those volunteer species will further enhance the food and shelter value of early successional habitat.
7. Prescribed burning or light disking will be conducted on rotation to control woody vegetation on CP-38E enrolled acreage.
8. Firebreaks, at least 15 ft. wide, should be managed for volunteer vegetation surrounding fields, or separating fields.
9. Once established, CP-38E habitat areas must not be disturbed during the nesting season (April 15th through September 15th) exceptions will be made for scheduled spot herbicide treatments.

Mid-contract management is a required part of all CP-38E contracts; and may include some or all of the following three activities:

Prescribed Burning during winter or spring on the enrolled acreage on the following schedule:

1st burn in winter of contract years 2-4 2nd burn in winter of years 4-6 3rd burn in winter of years 6-8

Disking during fall or winter on $\frac{1}{2}$ of enrolled acres each year following this rotation:

Half A: Disk in contract years 2, 4, 6, 8 Half B: Disk in contract years 3, 5, 7

Spot Apply Herbicide to undesirable woody vegetation throughout contract acreage during growing season of contract years 4 and 8.