

**USDA** Permanent Native Grasses  
Eastern ND Tallgrass Prairie  
Restoration SAFE

Farm Service Agency

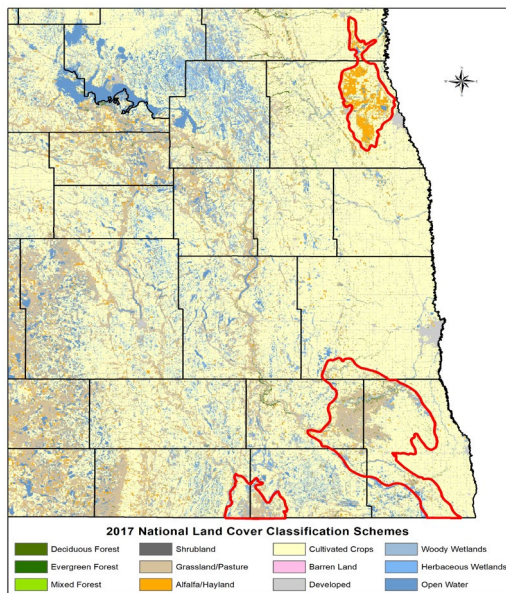
(ver. 07/2020)

### Purpose

To restore cropland to native tall-grass prairie habitat to maintain and increase Greater Prairie Chicken (*Tympanuchus cupido pinnatus*) populations in the project area. The project area encompasses the habitat and current distribution area of the two remaining Greater Prairie Chicken populations in North Dakota.

### Designated Area

Up to 30,000 acres of eligible cropland in the project area will be enrolled in CRP in order to meet the project goal.



### Size Requirements

No restrictions on maximum or minimum size of fields for this SAFE project.

### Cropland Eligibility

In addition to being in the project area, cropland must have been cropped or considered cropped in four of six years 2012 through 2017. Years that the land was enrolled in CRP are considered cropped. Land that has expired from CRP or land that is in the final year of an existing CRP contract may be enrolled in the SAFE project. Land that has expired from CRP or land that is in the final year of an existing CRP contract may be enrolled in the SAFE project.

### Wildlife

This practice is well suited for wildlife habitat. Nesting cover will be established on the cropland acreage and wetlands will be enhanced or restored. Selection of grass species will affect what type of wildlife will utilize these acres. Existing cover may also be eligible; however, it must meet minimum cover standards for the practice being enrolled.

### Program Benefits

1. Continuous CRP practices: FSA provides annual rental payments at 90 percent of the existing rate to eligible CRP continuous participants based on per acre cropland and marginal pastureland rental rates determined by FSA.
2. General CRP practices: FSA bases rental rates on the relative productivity of the soils within each county and the average dryland cash rent subject to a statutory 85 percent proration.
3. Continuous CRP practices are eligible for a Signup Incentive Payment (SIP) of 32.5 percent of the first full year annual rental payment is paid at contract approval on all newly enrolled Continuous CRP contract acreage.
4. Continuous CRP practices are eligible for a Practice Incentive Payment (PIP) of 5 percent of the cost to install the practice.
5. Cost-share of up to 50 percent of the reimbursable cost of installing the practice is provided by FSA.
6. CRP contracts may be for a 10 to 15-year period.
7. Land offered within at least 51 percent of the designated SAFE boundary, receive maximum ranking points for a general CRP signup offer.

### Grass Species

Practices included in the SAFE project include: CP38E-2, CP38E-18C and CP38E-25. Native plant species and varieties selected are those best adapted to the climate and the soils in the field being established to permanent cover. NRCS

works with the CRP participant to develop a conservation plan including selected species, seeding rates and other specifications necessary to ensure successful establishment. A conservation plan will include selected species and seeding rates. Seeding rates are based on pure live seed (PLS).

Refer to Herbaceous Vegetation Establishment Guide (HVEG), (NRCS Publication, Section 1, FOTG, References, Plant Materials) for the names of approved grass varieties.

[https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/ND/Herbaceous\\_Veg\\_Est\\_Guide.pdf](https://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/references/public/ND/Herbaceous_Veg_Est_Guide.pdf)

Acceptable points of origin for non-varietal or common grasses are the states of ND, SD, NE, MT, WY, MN and the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Existing cover may also be eligible; however, it must meet minimum cover standards for the practice being enrolled.

All seed must meet the requirements of the North Dakota State Seed Laws. All seed must be officially tested for purity and germination to enable PLS calculations to determine the proper seeding rate. Germination tests for all species should be made within twelve months prior to planting. If seeding is delayed, the seed will need to be retested.

### Specifications

Native grass and forb or legumes must be established or maintained according to the practice specifications and the conservation plan. The specifications are prepared in accordance with the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide practice standard (327) Conservation Cover or (643) Restoration and Management of Declining Habitats.

### Establishment Considerations

A companion crop may be used for spring seeded native grasses and forbs or legume for erosion control and weed suppression. Use a maximum of 10 lbs./acre of oats or barley, or 7 lbs./acre of flax. No companion crop is required for late summer seedings, but it may be desirable for erosion control and to protect developing seedlings. Companion crops shall be clipped prior to the boot stage

to minimize competition with emerging grass and legume plants. A second and subsequent clipping may be necessary when re-growth provides competition during the first year of establishment. Clipping height will be above developing seedlings.

### Seeding Dates

Approved cover must be seeded within 12 months of the CRP contract's effective date. Refer to the following table for planting dates. Existing cover being upgraded must be established within 24 months of the contract effective date.

Season of Planting for Cool Season Species	Area of the State	
	North of North Dakota Hwy 200	South of North Dakota Hwy 200
Spring	Prior to May 20	Prior to May 10
Late Summer	Aug 10 to Sept 1	Aug 10 to Sept 15
Late Fall	After Nov 1	After Nov 1
Warm Season Species	May 10 – June 25	May 10-June 25
Warm/Cool Season Mix	May 1-June 15	April 20-June 1

If legumes are part of a late summer seeding, the seed is to be planted by August 25.

### Seedbed Preparation

The seedbed must be essentially free of competing vegetation. It should be firm enough to permit seed placement at the desired depth and protected against erosion. A firm seedbed should hardly reveal adult footprints. This will allow for placement of the seeds at a depth of 1/4 to 3/4 of an inch into the soil. Grass seeds planted deeper than 1 inch are unlikely to emerge and persist.

Seedbed preparation will be mechanical or chemical. Refer to North Dakota Weed Control Guide (NDSU Circular W-253) for specific herbicide and weed control recommendations.

### Seeding Operation

The seed may be planted with a grain drill or grass drill. Broadcasting seed does not meet practice specifications and is ineligible for cost share payments. Grain drills are normal seeding equipment, including air-seeders, that can deliver the desired amount of seed to the proper depth.

The seeding depth will be as follows:

Soil Texture	Seeding Depth
Fine to Medium	1/4 to 3/4 inch

Coarse	1/2 to 1 inch
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### Temporary Cover

When CRP seeding is delayed beyond the recommended planting dates due to weather, seed availability, or site-specific conditions, a temporary cover may be required. The temporary cover will be planted with a grain drill. Cost share payments are available if the temporary cover is seeded by June 20. Refer to the following table for recommended species, planting dates and rates.

Barley, Oats	25 to 30 lbs./ac.	April 15 to June 20
Flax	8 to 10 lbs./ac.	May 1 to June 20
Grain Sorghum, Millet, Sudangrass	10 to 20 lbs./ac.	May 15 to Aug 15

### Use of Pesticides

Only those pesticides, which are labeled for the specific use, will be recommended. University and Extension publications and specific label instructions will be used for guidance on herbicide selection and use.

### Operation and Maintenance

Operation and maintenance will include, but not be limited to the following:

1. Control annual weeds and other competition the year of establishment, with early and timely clipping before seed heads appear, or timely application of herbicides. Only pesticides labeled for the specific use, shall be used.
2. After cover is established, prevent disturbance of cover during the primary nesting season (PNS) for wildlife (April 15 through August 1), without prior approval.
3. After the cover is established, control all weeds to the extent they do not adversely impact the required cover or surrounding landowners by:
  - a) treating with chemicals per label directions, or
  - b) spot mow before seed heads form. Spot treatment may be authorized by FSA during the primary nesting season, on problem areas.
4. Protect the acres from unauthorized haying and grazing. Fences may need to be constructed and/or maintained to exclude livestock.

5. Re-seed areas not having adequate permanent cover.
6. Do not use the contract area for field borders, field roads or other unauthorized uses that will damage or destroy the cover.
7. Do not use contract acres for disposal of livestock or organic waste unless authorized by FSA.
8. Control rodent infestations that adversely affect the perennial ground cover.
9. Use all chemicals according to label instructions.

### Cover Management

CRP participants are required to have site specific management activities ensuring:

- Plant diversity;
- Wildlife benefits; and
- Protection of soil and water resources.

At least 1 required management activity must be completed during the term of the CRP contract. Approved management activities include:

- Light disking, heavy harrow, prescribed burning, interseeding of forbs, litter removal, and Lawson aerator.
- Cost-share assistance is not available for any management activity.
- All practices are eligible for non-emergency haying and grazing.

Management of cover must be completed before the end of year 6 for contracts with a 10-year lifespan, or before the end of year 9 for contracts with a 15-year lifespan.

### Conservation Partner Assistance

Conservation partners may provide additional incentives for SAFE. The North Dakota Game and Fish Department may provide cost share for grass seed and additional incentives for public access through the Department's Private Land Open To Sportsman (PLOTS) program. Other partners, such as Ducks Unlimited and the Natural Resources Trust, may also provide incentives to landowners who perform wetland restorations on land they enroll into SAFE.

