



## State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) Rare and Declining Habitat Program Job Sheet



### PURPOSE

The purpose of this practice is to restore short stature grassland habitat for grassland songbirds and Bobwhite quail and maintain the cover in a diversity of successional stages that meet the nesting and brood rearing requirements of those species.

### WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

On fields that meet eligibility requirements for the State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) Initiative of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) as determined by the Farm Service Agency (FSA).

### CRP POLICY

- Fields must be located within counties identified in the a) Northern Bobwhite, b) Henslow’s Sparrow, or c) Sedge Wren/Grasshopper Sparrow Priority Areas (refer to Indiana guidance eligibility maps in 2-CRP).
- The contract duration for CP38E is 10-15 years.

### SPECIES SELECTION

Select only species from the Indiana (IN) Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) [Rare and Declining Habitat \(643\) Standard](#). Seed that is source identified by the Indiana Crop Improvement Association through the Yellow Tag certification program or equivalent shall be used.

### HABITAT TYPES

Rare and Declining Habitat plantings will consist of establishing one the habitat types described below. See the IN FOTG [Rare and Declining Habitat \(643\) Standard](#) and the attached [Specifications Sheet](#) for exact details.

1. Tall grass prairie. The seeding mixture will consist of a tall prairie grass mix (based on soil moisture tolerance), plus 10 additional forb species including at least:
  - a) Five (5) Composite species,
  - b) One (1) Legume species, and
  - c) Two (2) other species
2. Low-stature prairie. The seeding mixture will consist of a low-stature prairie grass mix (based on soil moisture tolerance), plus 10 additional forb species. Note: low stature prairies require a dormant seeding.
3. Sedge Meadow. Sedge meadows are wetlands on areas that are dominated by hydric soils. Before vegetation can be established, hydrology must be restored to its natural state. The seeding mixture will consist of a sedge meadow mix, plus
  - a) Three (3) sedge species, and
  - b) Five (5) forb species

### PLANTING

Plant the grasses/sedges/forbs according to the attached [Specifications Sheet](#). Any changes to these specifications must be approved by NRCS.

**To encourage the forb component of the seeding mixture it is strongly encouraged sowing the mixture during the dormant season (required for low stature prairie mixes).**

All construction and seeding must be completed within 12 months of the effective date of the contract to remain in compliance. If circumstances beyond the landowner’s control prohibit completion within the first 12 months, the local FSA County Committee may approve an extension to the next planting season.

## SEEDING DATES

Selected species will be planted within the dates in the specification sheet that will be provided for the site.

**Site Preparation:** It is very important to plant the vegetation into a weed-free seedbed. Weed control efforts should begin prior to planting, and may require multiple applications in both the fall and spring prior to planting. Use herbicides or tillage to eliminate competing vegetation. If necessary for erosion control, seed a temporary cover. Eliminate the temporary vegetation at planting time with tillage or herbicides. Contact your local Purdue University Extension Agent for specific herbicide use. **Apply all herbicides according to label.**

**Lime and Fertilizer:** Lime and fertilizer should not be applied to native grasses at establishment unless a current soil test shows phosphorus (P) and potassium (K) are in the deficient range or the pH is 6.1 or less. Do not apply any nitrogen (N) during establishment to minimize weed competition.

**Seed preparation:** Inoculate legume seed before seeding with the proper Rhizobia bacteria specific for the species. Re-inoculate seed if it was pre-inoculated more than 60 days prior to seeding. Be careful not to blend seed of varying size, shape and weight as this can make calibration of equipment and seeding uniformity difficult.

**No-Till seeding:** Use a no-till drill to reduce the risk of erosion and possible loss of seedlings. Ensure the drill is designed to handle the seed being planted (especially important for native grasses). Your local Soil and Water Conservation Districts may be able to assist in locating equipment. Set the drill to provide an ideal planting depth of no more than ¼ inch unless otherwise directed. Seeding native grasses deeper than ¼ inch will lead to potential failure. Soils that are too wet or too dry can also cause improper seed placement.

**Conventional Seeding:** Use a drill with seven (7) inches or less row spacing or a culti-packer seeder, designed for the seed to be planted. The seedbed should be worked to a minimum depth of three (3) inches and firmed before seeding. Grass seed should be drilled uniformly and seeded no more than 1/2 inch deep.

**Broadcast Seeding:** Seed may be broadcast if completed in a uniform manner. Pre-mixing the seed with 200 lbs. per acre of pelletized lime and utilizing an airflow applicator is also effective. Seedbeds should be worked to a minimum depth of three (3) inches and firmed before seeding. The seedbed should be culti-packed before and after seeding. It is acceptable to see up to ⅓ of the seed on the soil surface. Wind speed should be 15 m.p.h. or less when broadcasting.

**Weed Control During Establishment Period:** Mow, burn, or apply herbicides as needed to control unwanted

vegetation until a Final Status Review is issued, or for a maximum of 3 years after planting. Mow when competing weeds are taller than the planted vegetation, and at a mowing height above planted vegetation.

## OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

Noxious weeds and other undesirable plants, insects, and pests shall be controlled, including such maintenance as necessary to avoid detrimental effects to surrounding land.

*After* the Final Status Review or three (3) years (whichever comes first), maintain the planting according to your CRP conservation plan. Maintenance activities are allowed only on a spot basis and only if necessary to maintain stand health, maintain stand diversity, or control pests that will damage the CRP cover or adjacent lands. Burning must be in accordance with a prescribed burn plan. **MOWING and other maintenance activities are not authorized between April 1 to August 1** to protect ground-nesting wildlife. If maintenance activities are needed (allowed on a spot basis only) during these times, the FSA County Committee must approve the maintenance activity prior to the activity occurring. Native grasses will not be mowed lower than 12 inches. **Mowing for generic weed control or for cosmetic purposes is prohibited.**

Exclude all acres from haying and grazing year round, unless authorized. Fences may need to be constructed and maintained to exclude livestock throughout the entire year. The contract area cannot be used for field roads or other uses that will damage or destroy the cover.

## MID-CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

Mid-Contract Management (MCM) is required on this practice. If the CRP acres are less than 5 acres, the entire acreage can be managed in a single year; otherwise, the maximum amount that can be disturbed during any one year is ½ of the contract acreage. For maximum habitat value, disturb no more than 1/3 of the contract acreage in any given year.

Areas devoted to grass have the following options:

- Prescribed Burning
- Strip Disking
- Strip Spraying
- Inter-seeding forbs/legumes/pollinator habitat

MCM activities will be avoided on environmentally sensitive areas including:

- a) Concentrated flow areas,
- b) Critical areas,
- c) Within the first 20 feet of a practice that borders a water resource to avoid water quality resource concerns, and
- d) Other areas where gully erosion is likely.

Environmentally sensitive areas will be marked on the plan map to ensure Mid-Contract Management activities are avoided on these areas.

Grassland areas must be established for a minimum of three (3) years before initiating MCM activities.

MCM activities operations will not be performed from April 1 through August 1 to protect the primary nesting period for grassland bird species. It is also recommended, but is not required, to delay MCM activities until after August 15 to reduce the chance of harming fledgling birds and other young wildlife.

MCM activities operations will be performed along field contours, or across the slope, when practical.

Strips will parallel brushy or woody escape cover when feasible.

# SAFE CP38E: Rare and Declining Habitat SPECIFICATIONS SHEET

|                      |               |                  |                             |                        |                     |                   |              |
|----------------------|---------------|------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| <b>Landowner:</b>    |               |                  |                             | <b>County:</b>         |                     |                   |              |
| <b>Farm:</b>         | <b>Tract:</b> | <b>Field(s):</b> | <b>Acres:</b>               | <b>Upland Grasses:</b> | <b>Depressions:</b> | <b>Firebreak:</b> | <b>Date:</b> |
| <b>Soil Type(s):</b> |               |                  | <b>Soil Drainage Class:</b> |                        |                     |                   |              |

## Recommended Species and Seeding Rates

All rates are in Pure Live Seed (PLS)

Existing species diversity is sufficient to naturally re-colonize the site after sufficient site preparation.

**NOTE: Indiana Crop Improvement Association Yellow Tag seed should be used.**

| Seed Required from the Prairie Grass Seed Mix No. |                    |        |                           | Seed from the Composite List (Min. 5 species)                  |                    |       |                           |
|---|--------------------|--------|---------------------------|--|--------------------|-------|---------------------------|
| GRASS SPECIES                                     | Rate<br>Units/acre | Units  | Total =<br>(Rate X Acres) | Composite Forb Species   | Rate<br>Units/acre | Units | Total =<br>(Rate X Acres) |
|   |                    |        | 0.00                      |  |                    |       | 0.00                      |
|   |                    |        | 0.00                      |  |                    |       | 0.00                      |
|   |                    |        | 0.00                      |  |                    |       | 0.00                      |
|   |                    |        | 0.00                      |  |                    |       | 0.00                      |
|   |                    |        | 0.00                      |  |                    |       | 0.00                      |
| <b>GRASS SPECIES (Depressions only)</b>           |                    |        |                           |  |                    |       | 0.00                      |
|   |                    | plants | 0.00                      |  |                    |       | 0.00                      |
|   |                    | plants | 0.00                      |  |                    |       | 0.00                      |
| <b>Seed from the Legume List (Min. 1 species)</b> |                    |        |                           | <b>Seed or Plants from Other Species List (Min. 2 species)</b> |                    |       |                           |
|   |                    |        | 0.00                      |  |                    |       | 0.00                      |
|   |                    |        | 0.00                      |  |                    |       | 0.00                      |
|   |                    |        | 0.00                      |  |                    |       | 0.00                      |
|   |                    |        | 0.00                      |  |                    |       | 0.00                      |

|  |                          |                          |                                   |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Firebreaks:</b>  | <b>Firebreak Species</b> | <b>Rate<br/>Lb./acre</b> | <b>Total =<br/>(Rate X Acres)</b> |
|  |                          |                          | 0.00 <b>Lbs.</b>                  |
|  |                          |                          | 0.00 <b>Lbs.</b>                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Establish a Bare-Ground Firebreak by disking the Fall & Spring prior to Prescribed Burning<br>Disked areas will be re-seeded after each Prescribed Burn |                          |                          |                                   |

**NOTES:**

### Site Preparation - BEFORE Planting in Year:

|  |               |
|--|---------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Herbicide (per label):</b>                     | <b>Dates:</b> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Herbicide (per label):</b>                     | <b>Dates:</b> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Herbicide (per label):</b>                     | <b>Dates:</b> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Tillage:</b>                                   |               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Prescribed Burning:</b>                        |               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Temporary Seeding:</b>                         |               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Existing Woody Vegetation will be removed:</b> |               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <b>Other:</b>                                     |               |

**NOTES:**

## Planting Year:

Planting Method for Grasses/Forbs:

Date: See Seeding Dates on Page 2

Planting Method for Firebreaks:

Date: See Seeding Dates on Page 2

If unforeseen circumstances prohibit planting by this date, please contact the local NRCS office as soon as possible.

NOTES:

## Post-Planting Maintenance

**Mowing:** BEFORE final Status Review, or up to 3 years, mow to a minimum height of six (6) to eight (8) inches high when the weeds are 12 inches taller than the planted grasses

\*AFTER final Status Review, or up to 3 years, mow to a minimum height of six (6) to eight (8) inches

Herbicide\* (per label):

Prescribed Burning\*: According to an approved plan

Other:

\*NOTE: After the final Status Review has been issued, or three (3) years (whichever comes first), weed control and other maintenance activities will be conducted outside the nesting season of **April 1 - August 1**, and on a "spot" basis only, unless prior approval is granted by the FSA County Committee.

## MID-CONTRACT MANAGEMENT - STARTING IN YEAR:

see the attached Mid Contract Management Job Sheet for details

For CRP Mid-contract Management specifications see:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/in/programs/?cid=stelprdb1119594>

## Additional Information

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