

DNR-Division Of Fish & Wildlife State Acres For Wildlife (**SAFE**) Presentation

presented by

Josh Griffin, Farm Bill Coordinator
DNR-Division Of Fish & Wildlife

What Is SAFE?

- **STATE ACRES FOR WILDLIFE** Enhancement-a function of CRP
- Per Farm Service Agency CRP Notice 560.....

SAFE allows producers to install practices that benefit high priority State wildlife conservation objectives through the use of targeted restoration of vital habitat. This cooperative conservation effort is based on locally developed conservation proposals that address the highest priority wildlife objectives in the State before the practice may be implemented.

- Launched March 22, 2007

Used throughout the country, typically by state wildlife agencies, to target habitat development to high profile species, species in greatest conservation need, and many threatened/endangered species

SAFE In Indiana

- 6 SAFEs Historically: Northern Bobwhite, Ring-necked Pheasant, Henslow's Sparrow, Indiana Bat, Sedge Wren/Grasshopper Sparrow, & American Woodcock
- Original SAFEs focused on needed habitat types of targeted wildlife: grasslands, intermixed grasslands/wetlands, hardwood forestlands
- Original SAFEs had acreage caps per species-those acreage caps have since gone away (Original cap-13,100 ac. total, then expanded a year later to 42,100 ac.)
- Current acreage (March 2024) enrolled in all Indiana SAFE's: 56,763 (49,748-grassland; 6,878 trees)
- Largest Conservation practice in all of Indiana CRP-30% (larger than all General CRP practices combined)
- 2018 Farm Bill mandated changes to SAFE (moved to general CRP). Not logistically sound or a popular change.....
- So, SAFE moved back to continuous CRP in 2021 (each move required updates to each state's SAFE agreements)

ADVANTAGES OF SAFE UPDATES

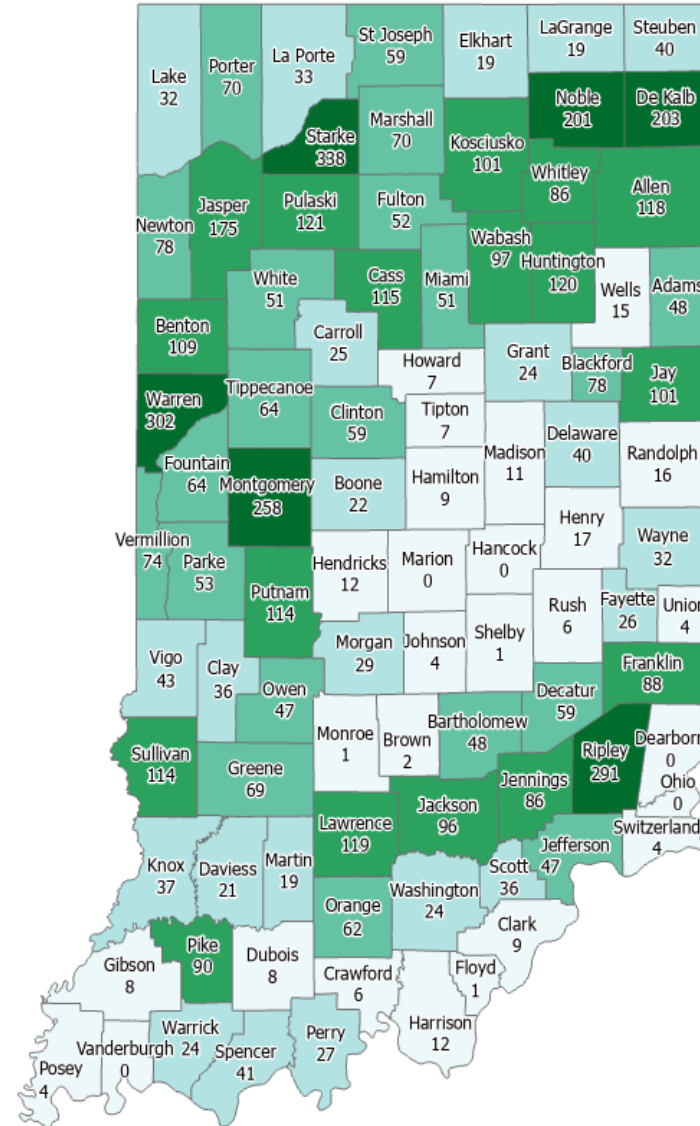
- Allowed DFW to update seed mixes/habitat components (early successional habitat, perching locations, limitations to tall WSG, etc.)
- Allowed for the inclusion of food plots in SAFE enrollments
- Allowed for clarity of administrative functions
- Meanwhile, the wildlife community was searching for a LOOONG overdue, desperately needed opportunity to develop a specific habitat component- **early successional** herbaceous habitat (critical for Northern Bobwhite). So, this update facilitated the needed early successional component within SAFE!

Current Indiana SAFE Agreements

- Northern Bobwhite
- Henslow's Sparrow
- Indiana Bat/Northern Long-eared Bat
- Ring-necked Pheasant

TOTAL Acreage Goal (all 4 Species): 130,000 (56,763 currently enrolled)

Current SAFE Contract Numbers- Distribution In Indiana



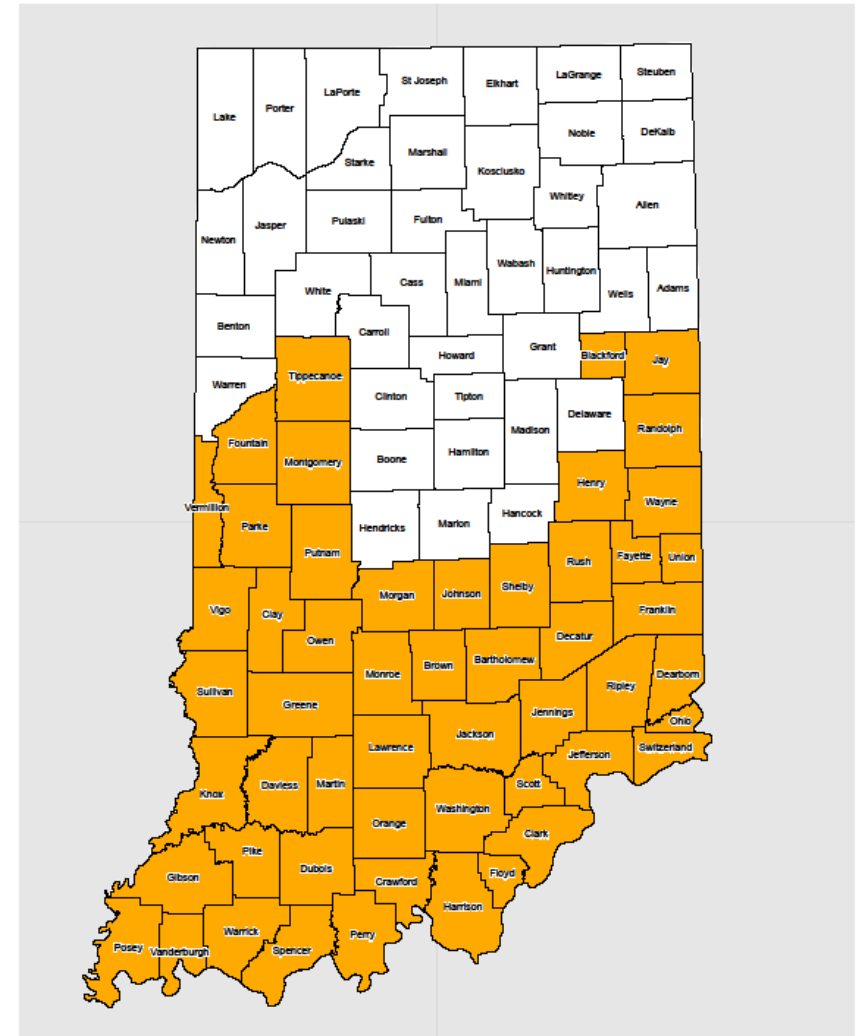
Northern Bobwhite SAFE

- **Eligible Counties In Indiana:** Posey, Vanderburgh, Warrick, Spencer, Perry, Crawford, Dubois, Pike, Gibson, Knox, Daviess, Martin, Orange, Lawrence, Greene, Sullivan, Vigo, Clay, Owen, Monroe, Morgan, Putnam, Parke, Vermillion, Fountain, Tippecanoe, Montgomery, Johnson, Shelby, Rush, Wayne, Randolph, Jay, Blackford, Henry, Fayette, Union, Franklin, Decatur, Bartholomew, Brown, Jackson, Jennings, Ripley, Dearborn, Ohio, Switzerland, Jefferson, Scott, Clark, Washington, Harrison, & Floyd
- **Minimal Acreage Size Of Enrollment:** 3 acres
- **Target Acreage Goal:** 50,000 acres
- **Conservation Practices Included:** CP38E-CP4D, CP38E-CP12
CP4D must include 25% REQUIRED early successional component
- **Habitat Type To Be Restored:** Established grasslands (Ex: Sideoats Grama, Prairie Dropseed, Little Bluestem, forbs) adjacent to shrub coverts and thickets (Hazelnut, Serviceberry, Blackberry) while also immediately adjacent to sparse vegetative cover called early successional habitat (cereal rye, oats, sunflowers-frequently disturbed).

Northern Bobwhite SAFE Focal Area

Includes 53 counties (expanded from 18 previously)

Northern bobwhite



Northern Bobwhite SAFE-Technical Requirements

CP4D

- CP4D sub practice must meet the highest point mix criteria in the EBI ranking index (EBI N1A)
- CP4D sub practice must follow FOTG guidelines and/or Indiana Seeding Tool requirements (420-Wildlife Habitat Planting)
- CP4D sub practice must be seeded to native grasses, forbs, or legumes planted as a mix. Only limited use of following species permitted: Big bluestem, Switchgrass, Indian Grass, & Prairie Cordgrass. These species individually will not exceed 5% of the grass mix, or 15% of the grass mix combined
- **CP4D sub practice must contain an early successional habitat component comprising 25% of the CP4D acreage**
 - Established to annual vegetation following 647 standard (which references 645 standard)
 - Approved species for this component include winter wheat, oats, cereal rye, millet, sorghum/milo, annual sunflowers, partridge pea or mixtures thereof**
 - Critical habitat for feeding, bugging, brood rearing, & dusting areas needed by Northern Bobwhite
 - Established in year 1 of contracts, along with vegetation establishment of other habitat components
 - Then, habitat will be mowed, tilled, & re-seeded in years 4 & 7 of each contract. Left fallow otherwise
 - Re-seeding in years 4 & 7 shall comprise the required “management activity” of that portion of CP4D (No sunflowers, millet, or milo in years 4 & 7-PNS limitation)
 - Early successional component shall not be placed on the outside edge or field border & will follow natural land contours, to minimize soil erosion.

Northern Bobwhite SAFE-Technical Requirements (continued)

CP4D

- Shrub/tree plantings required in CP4D-20% of the cover. (612-Tree/Shrub Establishment Standard)
- SAFE practice may be “stacked” beside existing CRP (Ex: CP21 may add CP38 immediately adjacent)
- If multiple fields in same contract, not all fields must contain each habitat component as long as within ¼ mile of each other. Fields greater than ¼ apart must contain each SAFE component in contract
- Contracts will be for 10 years.
- No mowing during the Indiana Primary Nesting Season except during cover establishment. No mowing for management or maintenance during nesting season
- Offers maximizing diversity of habitats in their contracts may be eligible for DFW incentive payment (not to exceed \$100 per acre)
- All SAFE contracts will receive a management plan developed by a Wildlife Biologist (DFW, PFQF, or TSP).

Northern Bobwhite SAFE-Technical Requirements (continued)

CP12

- Food Plot shall not exceed 10% of the acreage; no greater than 5 acres of any accepted offer.
- Food plots must be established immediately adjacent to permanent vegetative cover (Not fescue, smooth brome, or other invasive species)
- If multiple fields in same contract, not all fields must contain each habitat component as long as within $\frac{1}{4}$ mile of each other. Fields greater than $\frac{1}{4}$ apart must contain each SAFE component in contract
- Food Plots must follow the 645-Upland Wildlife Habitat Standard
- Inclusion of a food plot habitat component may make offers eligible for incentive payments

Northern Bobwhite SAFE-Technical Requirements (continued) Importance of early successional habitat



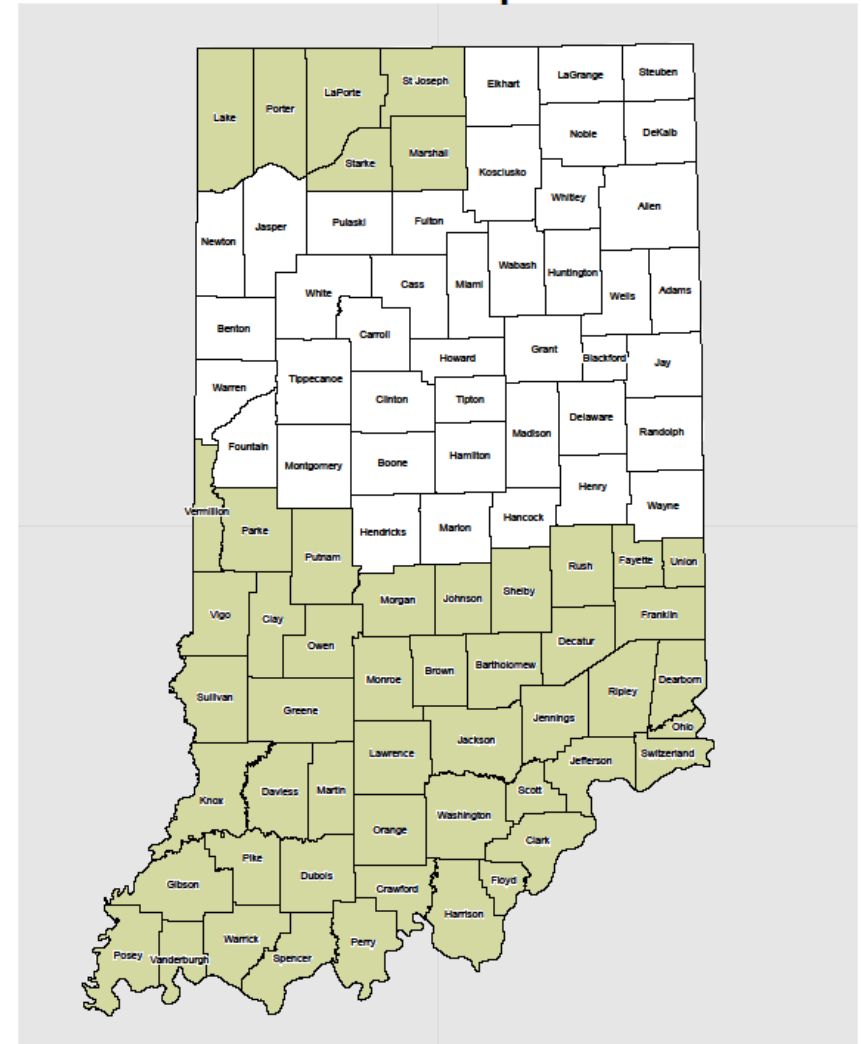
Henslow's Sparrow SAFE

- **Eligible Counties In Indiana:** Posey, Vanderburgh, Warrick, Spencer, Perry, Crawford, Dubois, Pike, Gibson, Knox, Daviess, Martin, Orange, Lawrence, Greene, Sullivan, Vigo, Clay, Owen, Monroe, Morgan, Putnam, Parke, Vermillion, Johnson, Shelby, Rush, Fayette, Union, Franklin, Decatur, Bartholomew, Brown, Jackson, Jennings, Ripley, Dearborn, Ohio, Switzerland, Jefferson, Scott, Clark, Washington, Harrison, Floyd, Lake, Porter, LaPorte, St. Joseph, Starke, and Marshall
- **Minimum Acreage Size Of Enrollment:** 5 acres
- **Target Acreage Goal:** 50,000 acres
- **Conservation Practices Included:** CP38E-CP2, CP38E-CP12
- **Habitat Type To Be Restored:** Thick, established, expansive grasslands with dense litter layers and short remnant woody or stem-like perching locations (typically generated from old forbs or shrubs). Examples of vegetation include Little Bluestem, Big Bluestem, Indiangrass, forbs with perching locations such as Liatris species.

Henslow's Sparrow SAFE Focal Area

Includes 51 counties (expanded from 17 previously)

Henslow's sparrow



Henslow's Sparrow SAFE-Technical Requirements

CP2

- CP2 sub practice must meet the highest point mix criteria in the EBI ranking index (EBI N1A)
- CP2 sub practice must follow FOTG guidelines and/or Indiana Seeding Tool requirements (420-Wildlife Habitat Planting)
- CP2 must include 9 forb species, three of which bloom in spring, summer, & fall respectively & contain at least 2 forbs that typically leave remnant Henslow's Sparrow perching locations.
Ex: Rattlesnake Master, Leadplant, New Jersey Tea, Marsh or Prairie Blazingstar, Prairie Dock, etc.
- SAFE practice may be "stacked" beside existing CRP (Ex: CP21 may add CP38 immediately adjacent)
- If multiple fields in same contract, not all fields must contain each habitat component as long as within ¼ mile of each other. Fields greater than ¼ apart must contain each SAFE component in contract
- Contracts will be for 10 years.
- No mowing during the Indiana Primary Nesting Season except during cover establishment. No mowing for management or maintenance during nesting season
- Offers maximizing diversity of habitats in their contracts may be eligible for DFW incentive payment (not to exceed \$100 per acre)
- All SAFE contracts will receive a management plan developed by a Wildlife Biologist (DFW, PFQF, or TSP).

Henslow's Sparrow SAFE-Technical Requirements (continued)

CP12

- Food Plot shall not exceed 10% of the acreage; no greater than 5 acres of any accepted offer.
- Food plots must be established immediately adjacent to permanent vegetative cover (Not fescue, smooth brome, or other invasive species)
- If multiple fields in same contract, not all fields must contain each habitat component as long as within ¼ mile of each other. Fields greater than ¼ apart must contain each SAFE component in contract
- Food Plots must follow the 645-Upland Wildlife Habitat Standard
- Inclusion of a food plot habitat component may make offers eligible for incentive payments

Henslow's Sparrow SAFE-Technical Requirements (continued)

Henslow's Sparrow Perching Locations



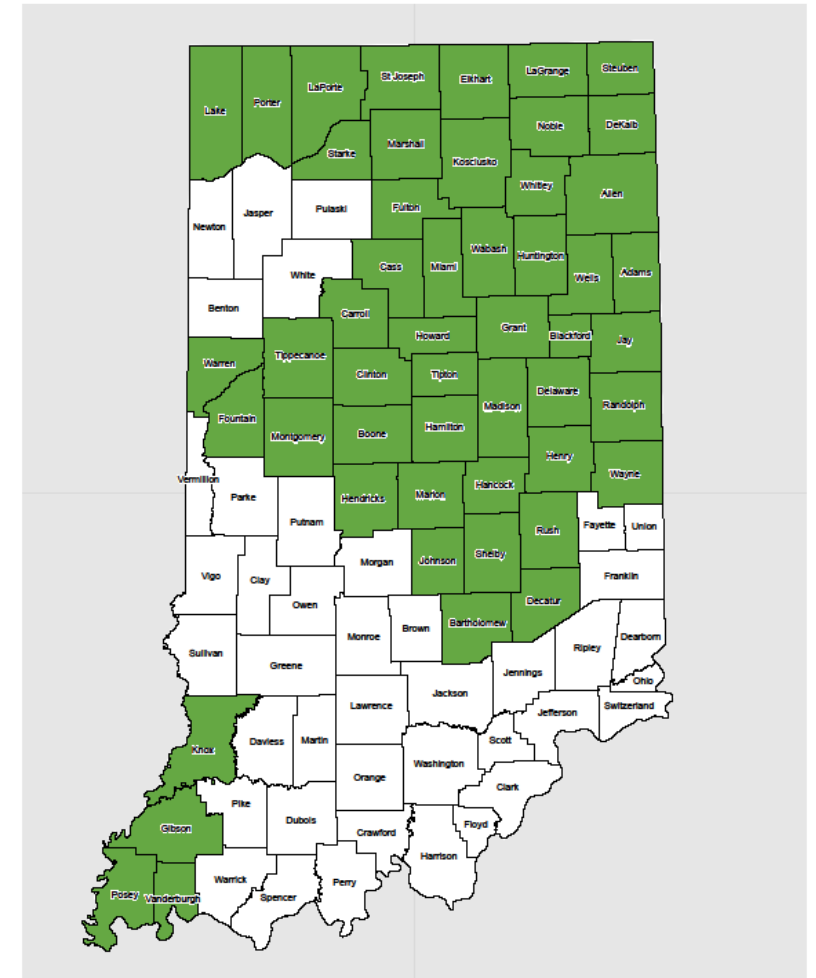
Indiana Bat & Northern Long-eared Bat SAFE

- **Eligible Counties In Indiana:** Posey, Vanderburgh, Gibson, Knox, Johnson, Shelby, Rush, Decatur, Bartholomew, Lake, Porter, LaPorte, St. Joseph, Marshall, Starke, Elkhart, Kosciusko, LaGrange, Steuben, Noble, DeKalb, Whitley, Allen, Warren, Fountain, Montgomery, Tippecanoe, Hendricks, Marion, Hancock, Henry, Wayne, Randolph, Delaware, Madison, Hamilton, Boone, Clinton, Carroll, Cass, Fulton, Miami, Wabash, Huntington, Wells, Adams, Jay, Blackford, Grant, Howard, and Tipton
- **Minimum Acreage Size Of Enrollment:** 3 acres
- **Target Acreage Goal:** 10,000 acres
- **Conservation Practices Included:** CP38-CP3A
- **Habitat Type To Be Restored:** Establishment of deciduous forestlands with native tree species including oaks, hickories and other preferred roosting location species of the target bat species. Examples of tree species to be established include Shagbark or Shellbark Hickory, White Oak, Red Oak, Black Oak, Black Cherry, & Black Walnut.

Indiana Bat/Northern Long-eared Bat SAFE Focal Area

Includes 51 counties (unchanged number of counties)

Indiana bat



Indiana Bat/Northern Long-eared Bat Sparrow SAFE-Technical Requirements

CP3A

- Each CP3A sub practice must follow FOTG guidelines and/or Indiana Seeding Tool requirements, additionally must include at least 8 hardwood species
- At least 10% of planting must be Shagbark or Shellbark Hickory. Burr or Swamp White Oak may be substituted in wet, poorly drained soils
- At least 30% of the planting must be members of red oak & white oak family, unless equally or more desirable tree species can be substituted (i.e. elm, shagbark hickory)
- Shagbark hickory component or listed substitutes will be maintained for the life of CRP-1
- Re-enrollments may include Eastern Cottonwood & Silver Maple to count towards necessary tree density & species requirements. However, cost share will not be provided for these two species nor will they count towards the aforementioned tree requirements for cover establishment
- SAFE practice may be “stacked” beside existing CRP (Ex: CP21 may add CP38 immediately adjacent)
- Contracts will be for 15 years.
- No mowing during the Indiana Primary Nesting Season except during cover establishment. No mowing for management or maintenance during nesting season
- All SAFE contracts will receive a management plan developed by a Forester or Wildlife Biologist (DOF, DFW, PFQF, or TSP)
 - No Food Plots (CP12) for the Bat SAFE!

Indiana Bat/Northern Long-eared Bat Sparrow SAFE-Technical Requirements



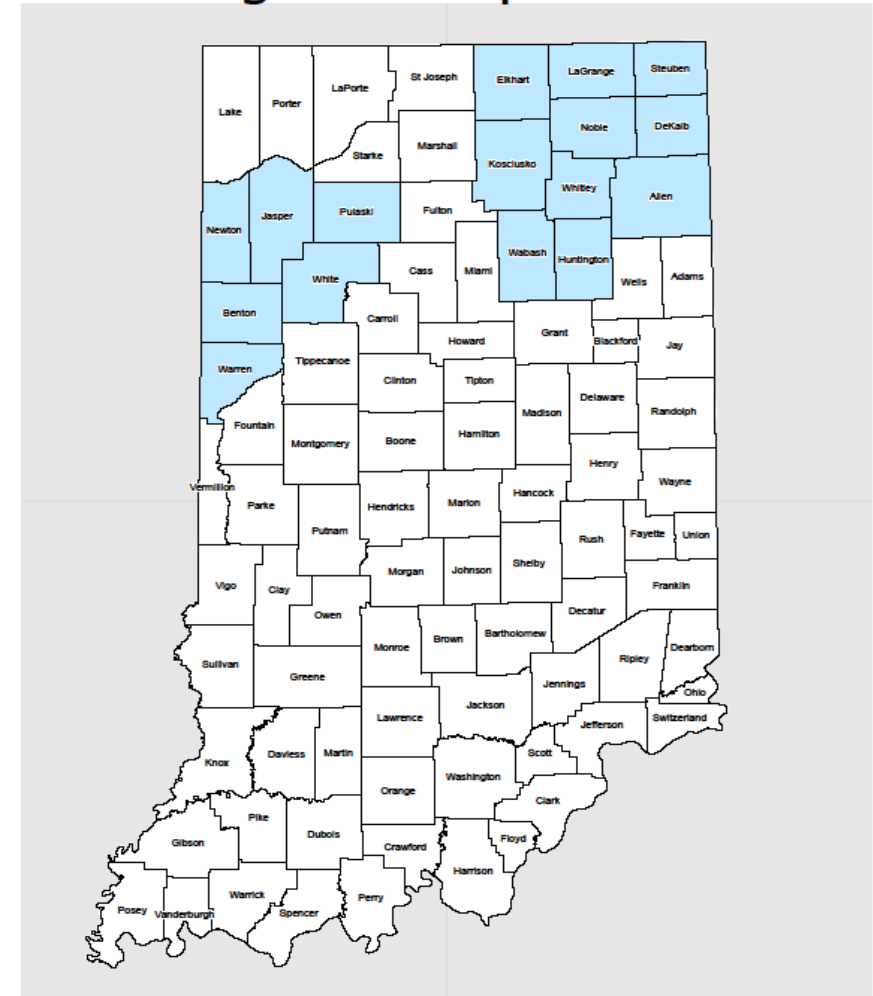
Ring-necked Pheasant SAFE

- **Eligible Counties In Indiana:** Newton, Benton, Warren, Jasper, Pulaski, White, Elkhart, LaGrange, Steuben, Noble, DeKalb, Kosciusko, Whitley, Allen, Huntington, and Wabash
- **Minimum Acreage Size Of Enrollment:** 3 acres
- **Target Acreage Goal:** 20,000 acres
- **Conservation Practices Included:** CP38E-CP2, CP38E-CP4D, CP38E-CP12
- **Habitat Type To Be Restored:** Tall, expansive grasslands (Ex: Big Bluestem, Switchgrass, Prairie Cordgrass) adjacent to shrub coverts/thickets (Hazelnut, Serviceberry, Blackberry) and waste grain/agricultural fields.

Ring-necked Pheasant SAFE Focal Area

Includes 16 counties (expanded from 13 previously)

Ring-necked pheasant



Ring-necked Pheasant SAFE-Technical Requirements

CP2 & CP4D

- CP2 & CP4D sub practices must meet the highest point mix criteria in the EBI ranking index (EBI N1A)
- CP2 & CP4D sub practices must follow FOTG guidelines and/or Indiana Seeding Tool requirements (420-Wildlife Habitat Planting)
- SAFE practice may be “stacked” beside existing CRP (Ex: CP21 may add CP38 immediately adjacent)
- If multiple fields in same contract, not all fields must contain each habitat component as long as within $\frac{1}{4}$ mile of each other. Fields greater than $\frac{1}{4}$ apart must contain each SAFE component in contract
- Contracts will be for 10 years
- Shrub/tree plantings on CP2 allowed (not required)-up to 10% of the cover. (612-Tree/Shrub Establishment Standard)
- Shrub/tree plantings required in CP4D-20% of the cover. (612-Tree/Shrub Establishment Standard)
- No mowing during the Indiana Primary Nesting Season except during cover establishment. No mowing for management or maintenance during nesting season
- Offers maximizing diversity of habitats in their contracts may be eligible for DFW incentive payment (not to exceed \$100 per acre)
- All SAFE contracts will receive a management plan developed by a Wildlife Biologist (DFW, PFQF, or TSP).

Ring-necked Pheasant SAFE-Technical Requirements (continued)

CP12

- Food Plot shall not exceed 10% of the acreage; no greater than 5 acres of any accepted offer.
- Food plots must be established immediately adjacent to permanent vegetative cover (Not fescue, smooth brome, or other invasive species)
- If multiple fields in same contract, not all fields must contain each habitat component as long as within ¼ mile of each other. Fields greater than ¼ apart must contain each SAFE component in contract
- Food Plots must follow the 645-Upland Wildlife Habitat Standard
- Inclusion of a food plot habitat component may make offers eligible for incentive payments

Ring-necked Pheasant SAFE-Technical Requirements (continued)



SAFE Monitoring Overview

- No formal population survey or monitoring required
- Voluntary, citizen science survey sent annually to each active SAFE participant
 - simple presence/absence survey (target wildlife species & similar species)
 - Survey also asks about vegetative cover on their property
 - If producers aren't comfortable with species ID or incapable of survey, they are encouraged to participate in volunteer efforts with conservation groups such as the Audubon Society to assist with surveys
- DFW and PFQF staff who develop a management plan for a SAFE project are asked to send the pertinent info for that project to me! (Name, Address, Email, Phone #, SAFE Focal Species, County, Etc.)
- Survey helps us understand impacts of conservation efforts, gauge landowner engagement in habitat management, create buy in with SAFE participants, & encourage outdoor recreation!

SAFE Monitoring Overview

Landowner Questionnaire:

1. What year did your SAFE contract begin? _____

2. What does the vegetation on your SAFE acreage look like now? If you do not know, reference your contract's most recent status review or O&M status sheet.
 - Well-established, diverse native grass & wildflowers
 - Largely native grasses with little wildflowers
 - Dominated by invasive plants such as fescue, Canada thistle, autumn olive, sericea lespedeza and/or Johnson grass
 - Largely cool season or introduced grasses & legumes (fescue, orchardgrass, clovers, etc.)
 - The field is not established to appropriate conservation cover
 - Don't know

3. Does your SAFE enrolled acreage have trees and shrubs that were not planted growing on your enrolled safe acreage?
 - Yes* *If yes, what percentage of the field? _____%
 - No

SAFE Monitoring Overview

| Bird Species | Heard? (Yes/No) | Seen? (Yes/No) | Additional Notes |
|----------------------|--------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| Dickcissel | | | |
| Eastern Meadowlark | | | |
| Henslow's Sparrow | | | |
| Northern Bobwhite | | | |
| Ring-necked Pheasant | | | |

⋮
⋮
⋮
⋮
⋮
⋮

For questions regarding SAFE, please contact:

Josh Griffin
Farm Bill Coordinator
Indiana Department Of Natural Resources-Division Of Fish & Wildlife
2650 State Road 44
Martinsville, IN 46151
Office Phone (765) 792-4873
Cell Phone: (317) 409-4363
Email: jgriffin@dnr.IN.gov

Questions?

