



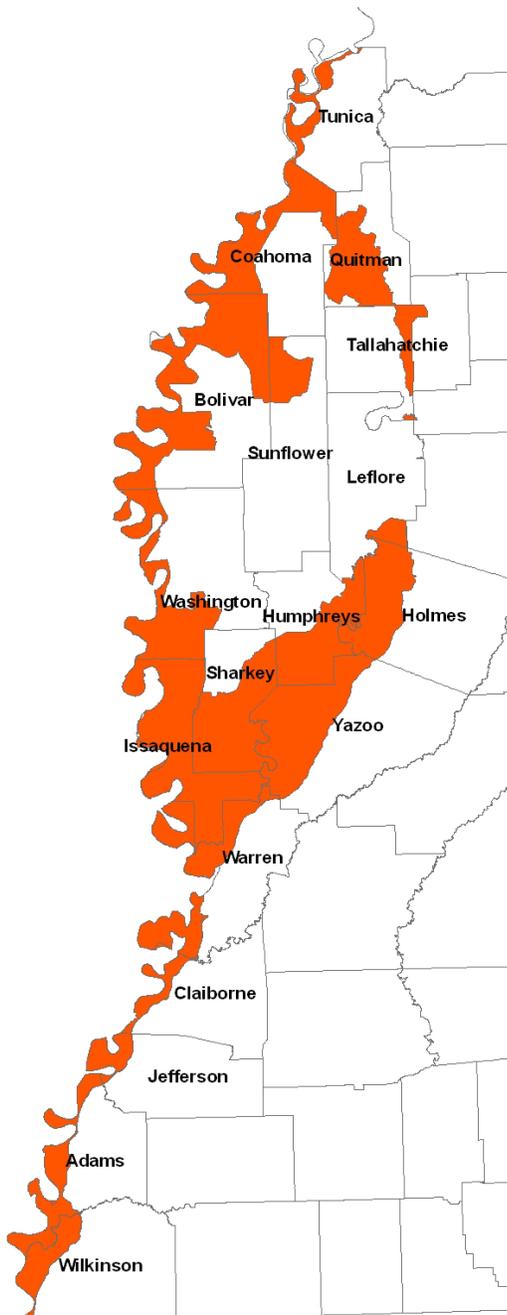
United States
Department of
Agriculture

June 2008

Conservation Reserve Program Mississippi State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) Black Bear Habitat

USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA) is offering a Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) initiative to improve black bear habitat through restoration of bottomland hardwoods and wetlands within focal areas of Mississippi. This SAFE initiative will assist to design and establish up to 7,950 acres of black bear habitat.

Black Bear Habitat Focal Area



Sign-up

Sign-up begins June 23, 2008, at local FSA offices for the CRP SAFE Habitat Initiative and runs continuously until the acreage goal is met, or farm bill authority for CRP expires, whichever comes first.

Eligible Land and Practices

To be eligible for this practice, land must be located within the SAFE Black Bear Habitat 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 1996 and 2001 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 for the past three years 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 15 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 no more than 15 years.

Cooperating Agencies

CRP is administered by USDA's FSA with assistance from USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service; Mississippi Forestry Commission; and local soil and water conservation districts.

Technical Requirements for CRP CP38B and CP38C, SAFE Habitat

This practice will establish native bottomland hardwood forests (CP-38C) and wetlands (CP-38B) on cropland to benefit black bear, including the state listed Black Bear and the federally Endangered Louisiana Black Bear. These habitat conditions will also benefit a range of other wildlife species.

Wetland restoration requires the establishment of semi-permanent wetlands (retaining water 9-12 months per year) with a depth of at least 3 feet.

Once established, wetland restoration areas can be disturbed with prescribed burning or light disking when dry to control woody vegetation and improve wildlife habitat conditions.

Forest establishment will require planting at least 3 approved native tree species, with no more than 60% of seedlings being hard mast species.

Plantings must include flood-tolerant, cavity-forming species (Cypress, Water tupelo, and/or Overcup oak) in low lying, flood-prone sites to provide future den cavities for black bear and other wildlife.

Enrolled properties must include 5% of total contract enrollment planted solely in approved soft mast trees or woody shrubs and vines. These plantings must occur in clusters a minimum of ¼ acre in size concentrated toward the center of the enrolled property and contiguous if site conditions permit.

CP38C plantings require an initial stocking rate of 435 seedlings per acre, with variable stocking rates for approved woody shrubs and vines.

CP38C plantings must include only species from the list of approved species for the practice.

Cooperating Agencies for the Conservation Reserve Program, State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE), CP38B and CP38C Black Bear Habitat Initiative

