

# Oregon Columbia Plateau Mule Deer SAFE

State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE)



## Overview

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) are partners in implementing a State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement (SAFE) project to enroll agricultural land in five counties, along the southern and eastern borders of the Columbia Plateau Eco-region of north-central Oregon, and convert it to conservation covers providing improved mule deer habitat.

## Background

SAFE is part of the USDA Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). CRP is a federally funded voluntary program that contracts with landowners and agricultural producers to establish and manage vegetative covers that control soil erosion, improve water quality, and provide wildlife habitat.

SAFE is a unique type of CRP that offers organizations the opportunity to partner with the USDA to establish habitat for high-priority wildlife species on agricultural land. SAFE sponsors work with the USDA to identify the wildlife species, the vegetative cover that provides habitat for the target species, and the location in the state where the habitat is needed. A partnership is formed between the SAFE sponsor and the USDA, and federal funds are made available to allow for CRP enrollment on eligible land within the SAFE project location.

## Target Wildlife Species

The goal of the Oregon Columbia Plateau Mule Deer SAFE is to enhance mule deer populations in the area. Historically the core area of the ecoregion supported higher numbers of resident mule deer. These populations have been declining in part due to degraded and fragmented habitat resulting decreased availability of high quality forage for pregnant mule deer does and lower survival.

## Habitat

Landowners and agricultural producers participating in the Oregon Columbia Plateau Mule Deer SAFE are required to develop a conservation plan with assistance from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) or a technical service provider (TSP). The conservation plan will provide details on how to restore and sustain native grassland and shrub-steppe habitat providing improved winter forage. After the habitat is established, it will need to be maintained and managed by conducting management activities during the contract period. All required management activity must be performed outside of Primary Nesting Season (PNS).

Management activities will be determined by the producer, NRCS or ODFW wildlife biologist and will be applied according to a conservation plan. Management activities include inter-seeding, prescribed burning, mowing, and prescribed grazing. Proper habitat establishment, maintenance, and management will maximize benefits for mule deer as well as other species highlighted in the Oregon Conservation Strategy.



## Project Location

The Oregon Columbia Mule Deer SAFE project location includes portions of Gilliam, Morrow, Sherman, Umatilla, and Wasco Counties.

## Eligible CRP Practices

This SAFE project uses the following CRP practices:

- ◆ CP38E-1, SAFE Establishment of Permanent Introduced Grasses and Legumes
- ◆ CP38E-2, SAFE Establishment of Native Grasses and Legumes
- ◆ CP38C-3A, SAFE Hardwood Trees
- ◆ CP38E-4D, SAFE Permanent Wildlife Habitat
- ◆ CP38E-12, SAFE Wildlife Food Plots
- ◆ CP38E-25, SAFE Rare and Declining Habitat (Grass)

## Haying and Grazing

Non-emergency and emergency haying and grazing is allowed on practices CP38E-1, CP38E-2, CP38E-4D but prohibited on CP38C-3A, CP38E-12, and CP38E-25 practices according to an approved conservation plan developed by NRCS or TSP. No haying and grazing allowed during the PNS for all SAFE practices.

## Eligibility Requirements

Because SAFE is part of CRP, certain land and participant eligibility rules apply. To begin with, land must be in the project area and meet cropping history. CRP participant eligibility rules also apply to SAFE.

## Payments and Incentives

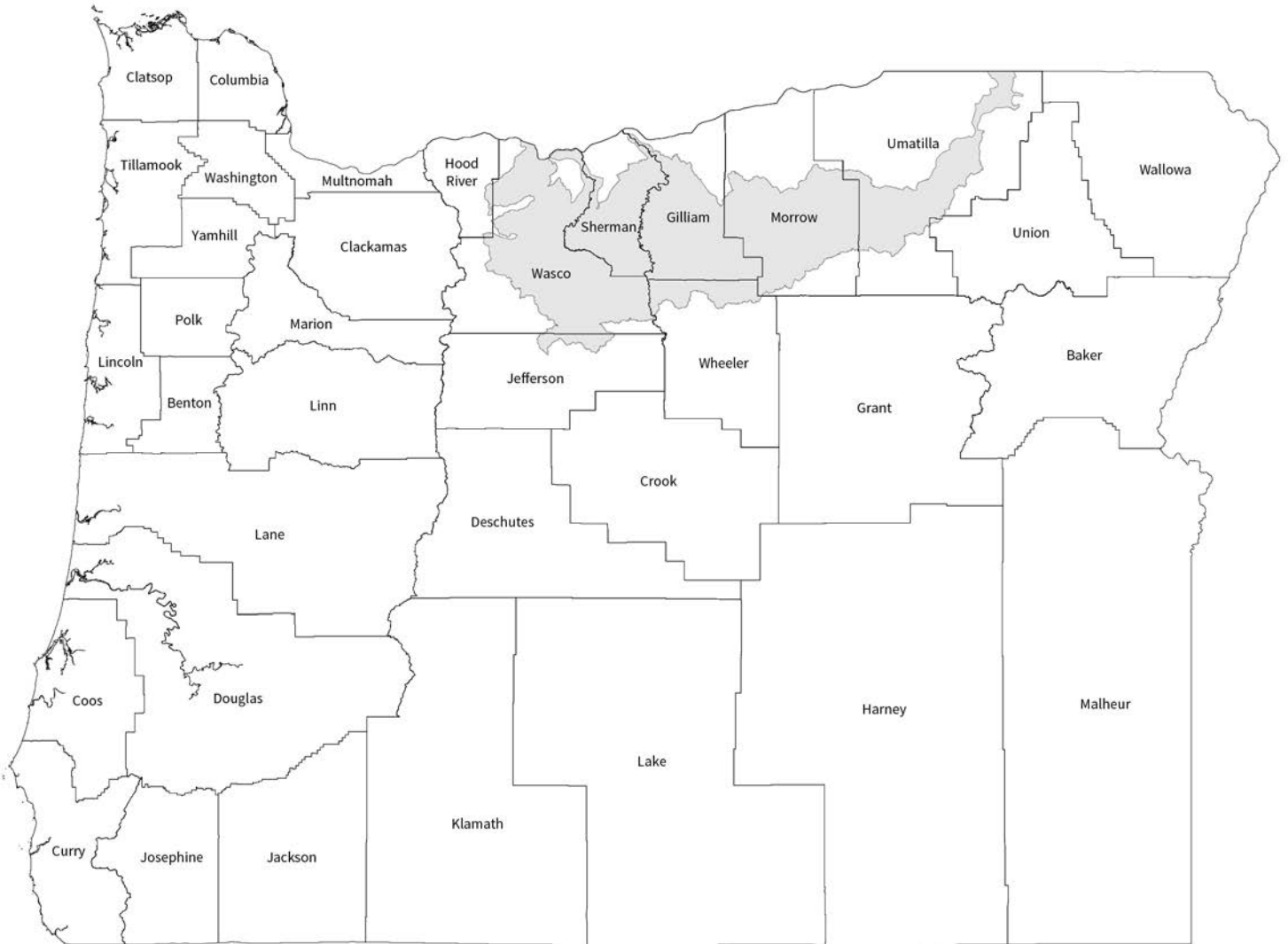
In exchange for participation in CRP SAFE, the Farm Service Agency (FSA) provides participants with annual per acre rental payments, cost-share to assist with habitat establishment expenses, and in some cases additional monetary incentives.

## For More Information

This fact sheet is provided for informational purposes only; other restrictions or requirements may apply. Consult your local FSA office for details. For more information, contact your local service center and USDA Farm Service Agency office: [farmers.gov/service-locator](https://farmers.gov/service-locator).



# Oregon Columbia Plateau Mule Deer SAFE Project Map



## Legend

-  FSA County Boundary
-  Oregon Columbia Plateau Mule Deer SAFE Project Area