

Farmers Can Get Dollars For Conservation With New SAFE Program

PINE BLUFF, ARK.

Farmers and landowners of marginal cropland seeking to forego the uncertainties of farming for a steady income and to help the environment should consider SAFE – a new conservation program, says Dr. Henry English, director of the Small Farm Program at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB).

SAFE is State Acres for Wildlife Enhancement, a new Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) program offered by the Arkansas Farm Service Agency (FSA). SAFE's initiative is to enhance high priority wildlife habitat on marginal croplands through reforestation and the restoration of grasslands and wetlands in 54 counties.

Under the SAFE program, the cost share is 90 percent, plus an additional \$100 per acre spring Signing Incentive Payment (SIP) in addition to

the producer's annual 10-to-15 year soil rental payments, which usually average \$62 an acre. "Enrolling acres prone to flooding, drought, low yielding, not land leveled or hard to irrigate in SAFE could prove quite beneficial to producers," says Dr. English.

Farmers should decide if the SAFE program is for them as soon as possible because once acreage goals are met, signup will cease, warns Dr. English. Enrollment is limited to 9,700 acres in Arkansas on a first-come, first-served basis.

For more information about CRP SAFE enrollment, farmers should contact their county FSA or Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) offices or the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission at (877) 972-5438. Δ