

Private Lands & Grassland Bird Conservation in the Upper Midwest

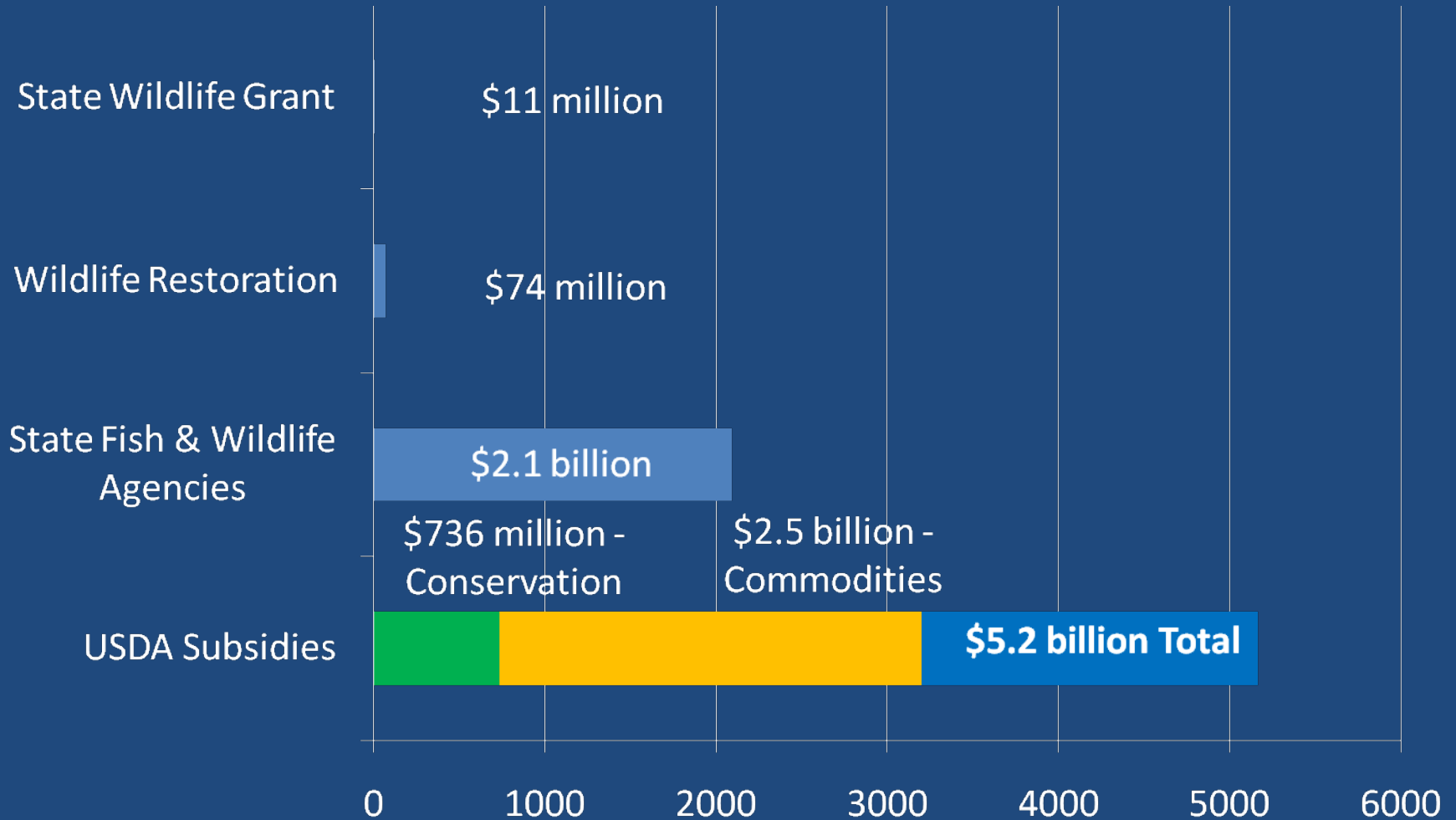
Just over 90% land area in private ownership

More than 95% of grassland is privately owned

About 58% is “farmland” (and highly influenced by the Farm Bill)



Why Bother With The Farm Bill?



Ways to Play the Farm Bill Game

- Legislative
- Administrative
 - Washington, DC
 - State Offices, Technical Committees & Working Groups
 - County Service Centers

Influencing National Office Administration

- Create practices within programs
 - Multi-state collaboration most effective
 - Recent successes, like field borders (CP33) and SAFE (CP38)
- Determine incentives for each practice
 - Soil rental rates
 - Cost share
 - Timing, eligibility for sign-up

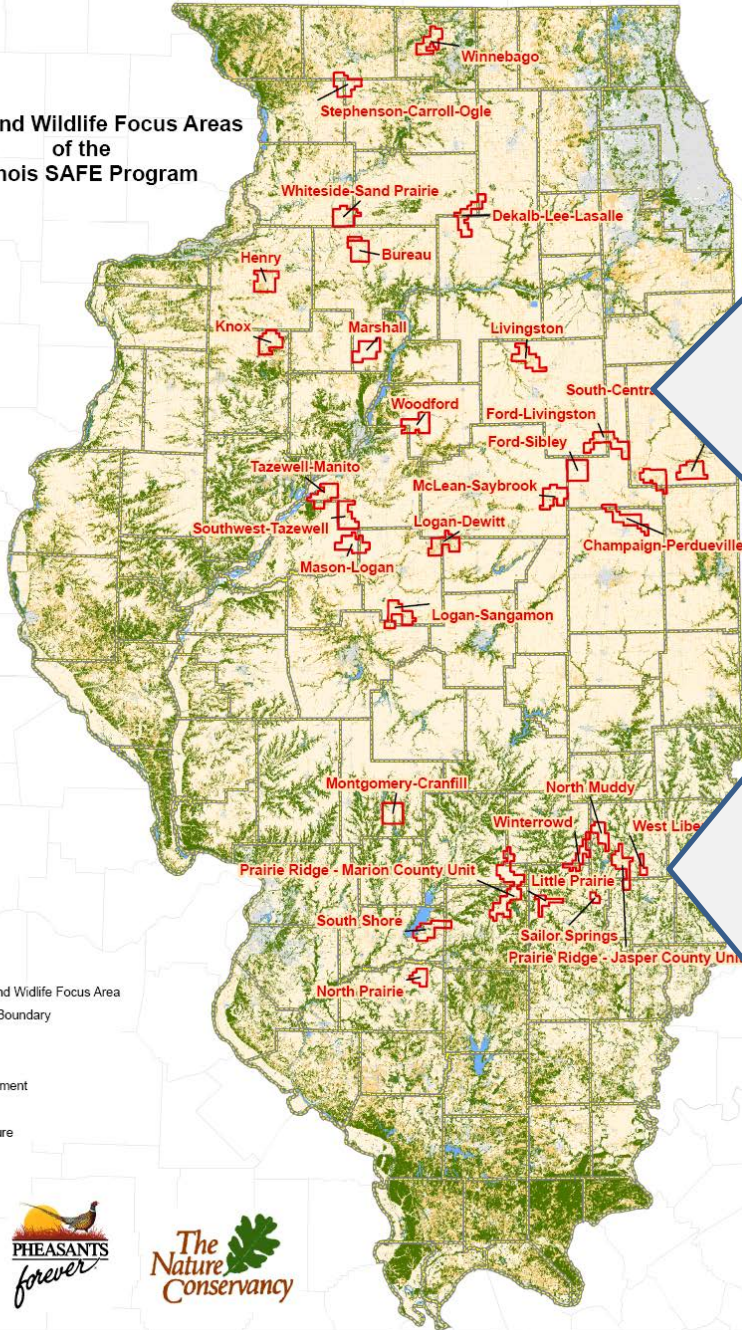
Influencing State-Level Administration

- State Technical Committees
 - Typically mid-high level staff
 - Decision/Input on state implementation, priorities, and practice standards
- Working Groups
 - Convened as needed for technical expertise
 - Develop options for practice standards (seed mixes, seeding rates, engineering specs)

Illinois SAFE Program

- Authorized for 20,600 acres
- Illinois Wildlife Action Plan's Farmland & Prairie Campaign
- Grassland Bird Conservation Area model
- Population Objectives:
 - Double populations of GPCH and RNPH *in focus areas*
 - 30% increase in grassland songbirds *in focus areas*

Grassland Wildlife Focus Areas of the Illinois SAFE Program



- Grassland Wildlife Focus Area
- County Boundary
- Forest
- Grass
- Development
- Water
- Agriculture



SAFE Monitoring

- Field Level
 - before-after-treatment-control
 - birds and small mammals
- Focus Area/Regional Level
 - Roadside BBS-style routes in focus areas (before and after SAFE)
 - BBS routes outside focus areas (before and after SAFE)



SAFE Implementation

- Targeted vs. Opportunistic paradigm shift
- Outreach
 - Limited success with direct mail, workshops
 - Farm Bill Biologists new in 2010
- Incentives
 - USDA incentives not economically competitive
 - Limited private incentives, no state incentive
- Mixed messages from USDA
 - Information sharing
 - Local NRCS, FSA, and SWCD politics
 - Continued focus on outputs, not outcomes