

**Effort Uses Plant & Pollinator Science Collaboration at all Levels to Make Land More Resilient to Drought, Fires, Invasive Species**

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**BOISE, IDAHO** – As part of a comprehensive, science-based strategy to address the threat of wildfires that are damaging landscapes across the West, the Department of the Interior today announced the release of a [National Seed Strategy](#) for rehabilitation and restoration to help foster resilient and healthy landscapes.

The Strategy, developed in partnership with the Plant Conservation Alliance and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, is meant to guide ecological restoration across major landscapes, especially for those lands damaged by rangeland fires, invasive species, severe storms and drought. The Strategy is in place to put emphasis on the importance of planting appropriate seeds to help grow plant life and pollinator habitat, which are critical natural defenses against climate change.

“Having the right seed in the right place at the right time makes a major difference in the health of our landscapes,” said U.S. Secretary of the Interior Sally Jewell. “This is a collaborative effort to ensure that we’re taking a landscape level approach to supporting lands that are more resilient to drought, intense fires and invasive species.”

In 2012, more than two million acres of sagebrush habitat burned in four western states. Now, worsening landscape scale disturbances, like wildfires and drought, have exacerbated land managers’ need for mechanisms that build a natural defense against a changing climate.

In the East, Hurricane Sandy caused widespread damage to native plant habitats that stabilize soils, filter water and absorb storm surges. A chronic shortage of native seed for restoration purposes left those landscapes vulnerable to hostile species and erosion, while undermining their ability to build up resilience, support wildlife and economic activity.

The National Seed Strategy outlines coordinated and focused research, as well as improvements in seed production and restoration technology to increase the availability of genetically appropriate, locally adapted seed. The research findings identified in the Strategy will inform the development of new management tools to aid in restoration planning and implementation.

Deputy Director of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Steve Ellis announced the strategy today at the BLM Boise Regional Seed Warehouse. He was joined by BLM Idaho State Director Tim Murphy; Chicago Botanic Garden, Vice President of Science Dr. Greg Mueller (Representing the Plant Conservation Alliance); U.S. Forest Service Resource Staff Officer Boise National Forest, Lynn Oliver, and Lucky Peak Nursery Manager Boise, Clark Fleege; American Seed Trade Association, Chair Risa DeMasi; as well as Jerry Benson, president, of BFI Native Seeds.

“Large, disturbed areas must be replanted quickly to avoid severe erosion or colonization by non-native invasive plants,” Deputy Director Ellis said. “In many cases, it has been difficult to obtain and deliver adequate quantities of the appropriate seed to meet a region’s particular need. This Strategy builds on the significant achievements we are making in landscape restoration, and calls for an unprecedented level of collaboration and commitment to further enhance the nation’s supply and distribution of the right seeds.”

“Our national grasslands and forests are threatened by an ever-increasing occurrence of wildfire and invasive plants, and need to be restored,” said Carlos Rodriguez-Franco, Forest Service Acting Deputy Chief for Research and Development. “Native seeds for wildflowers, trees, shrubs, and grasses are essential to restore lands damaged from wildfire and to restrict advancement of non-native plants to create resilient, adaptive landscapes for wildlife to flourish. This National Seed Strategy will help ensure the

success of post wildfire restoration efforts to create native habitat for wildlife. It underscores the value of Federal partners working together to be good stewards of the environment on behalf of the American people.”

The Strategy involves creating a national network of facilities (federal, tribal, state, local and private) that would provide seed storage resources. This network would support the [Presidential Memorandum on Pollinators](#) and help increase the availability of native seed to a broader user base. The Strategy also calls for the coordinated establishment of a nationwide network of native seed collectors, a network of farmers and growers working to develop seed, a network of nurseries and seed storage facilities to supply adequate quantities of appropriate seed, and a network of restoration ecologists working on the ground. While the use of native seed is encouraged, the Strategy does not preclude the use of non-native seed in the instances where it is appropriate.

Sophia Shaw, CEO of Chicago Botanic Garden and chair of the Plant Conservation Alliance Non-Federal Cooperators Committee, said the Strategy was a major step forward for restoration and rehabilitation. “The cooperators look forward to helping federal agencies implement the strategy across the country,” Shaw said.

The Seed Strategy does not change or create new policy, but provides a framework for increased collaboration and a common set of goals by using the collective resources of participating agencies. It also aims to provide all land managers – federal, tribal, state, county, and private – the tools they need to address ecological restoration at all levels.

The Strategy is also a major action item called for in the Interior Department’s [rangeland fire strategy](#) to address the increasing threat of wildfires that damage vital sagebrush landscapes and productive rangelands in the West, especially in the Great Basin states of California, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon and Utah. That strategy outlines the need to aggressively restore fire-impacted landscapes using native seed and local vegetation.

The [Conservation Objectives Team \(COT\) report](#), prepared by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to guide efforts to conserve the Greater sage-grouse,

highlighted the importance of restoring sagebrush ecosystems to healthy native sagebrush plant communities. As invasive annuals like cheatgrass replace native perennial bunch grass communities, the frequency, and intensity of rangeland fires increases. For this reason, the COT emphasized that 'every effort must be made to retain and restore native plant communities to reduce the risk of fire in the sagebrush ecosystem.'

Envisioned and initiated by the BLM as collaboration between partners, the Strategy was developed in concert with many local, state and federal partners, including the Plant Conservation Alliance (PCA). The PCA is an umbrella organization of more than 300 non-federal partners who work together to conserve and restore native plant communities across the United States, including biologists, resources managers and soil scientists.

The goals and objectives for the strategy were initially created during a Seed Conference held in Washington, D.C., in June 2014. Private seed growers and organizations such as the Western Governors' Association have also engaged during the development of the strategy.

The 12 federal agencies also engaged in the development of the strategy include the Department of the Interior (BLM, Bureau of Indian Affairs, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey and the National Park Service); Department of Agriculture (Agricultural Research Service, National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and U.S. Forest Service); Department of Transportation (Federal Highway Administration); the Smithsonian Institution; and the U.S. Botanic Garden.

For more information on the National Seed Strategy for Rehabilitation and Restoration, [visit this website](#).