

13 states to share \$10 mil. to cut wildfire risks

By Keith Ridler, AP

BOISE, Idaho – Interior Secretary Sally Jewell has announced \$10 million for land restoration projects in 13 states in a strategy to reduce catastrophic wildfires.

Jewell said June 12 that making land more resilient to fire is essential for vulnerable species and for healthy rangelands, forests and watersheds.

Eight of the states are in the West, with projects in conifer forests and sagebrush rangelands, where wildfires have been especially destructive in the last decade. Sagebrush is also habitat for sage grouse, an imperiled bird under consideration for federal protections.

Georgia, Florida, Virginia and North and South Carolina also are receiving money to help restore longleaf pine forests, home to the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker.

The projects are part of a new Interior Department program uniting federal agencies, tribes, states and groups to create fire-resilient landscapes.