



News Release

Great Lakes - Big Rivers Region External Affairs Office

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Invites Comment on Proposed Changes to Indiana Bat Recovery Plan

Actions to help recover the endangered Indiana bat are outlined in a draft revised Indiana Bat Recovery Plan released today by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The Service is seeking input on the recovery measures suggested in the plan during a public comment period which ends July 16, 2007.

Recovery plans are developed for plants and animals listed as endangered or threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act. Recovery plans provide a blueprint of recommended actions by state, federal, corporate and other managers to improve the status of listed species to the point that they no longer need protection of the ESA.

Measures recommended in the draft plan to recover the Indiana bat include conservation and management of hibernacula – the caves or other underground areas where bats hibernate; conservation and management of summer habitat where the species reproduces and raises its young; additional research into the species' needs and threats to its survival; and public education and outreach.

As the previous plan did, the draft revised plan focuses heavily on hibernacula, but it also increases focus on habitats used by the Indiana bat in summer. The draft also establishes four recovery units, including the Ozark-Central, Midwest, Appalachian Mountains and Northeast.

The draft revised plan outlines criteria for reclassifying the Indiana bat to “threatened” under the ESA – a less serious designation – and for recovering the bat and removing it from the endangered species list. The draft revised plan was developed by the Service in cooperation with members of the Indiana bat recovery team and is an update of a plan first developed in 1983.

Indiana bats are found over most of the eastern half of the United States. The 2005 population estimate is about 457,000 Indiana bats, about half as many as when the species was listed as endangered in 1967. Almost half of all Indiana bats (207,000 in 2005) hibernate in caves in southern Indiana.

Threats to the Indiana bat vary during its annual cycle. At hibernation sites, threats include changes to caves, mines, and surrounding areas that alter airflow and temperature. Human disturbance and vandalism pose significant threats during hibernation through direct mortality and by arousing the bats during hibernation, which depletes their fat reserves. Natural catastrophes can also have a significant effect during winter because the bats are concentrated in a relatively few sites. During summer months, possible threats include loss and degradation of forested habitat.

To review the plan, visit <http://midwest.fws.gov/endangered>; or request a copy on CD from: Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ecological Services Field Office, 620 South Walker Street, Bloomington, IN 47403-2121.

Electronic comments on the recovery plan may be submitted to: ibat_recovery_plan@fws.gov or written comments may be sent to the address above
Comments must be received by July 16, 2007.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 64 fishery resources offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign and Native American tribal governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

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