

Service Reopens Comment Period on Proposal to List the Northern Long-eared Bat as an Endangered Species

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has reopened the comment period for 60 days, through August 29, 2014, on a proposal to list the northern long-eared bat as an endangered species under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The Service has also extended the agency's deadline to April 2, 2015, to make its final decision on whether to list the species.

The Service proposed to list the bat as endangered on October 2, 2013, citing white-nose syndrome, a disease that has killed millions of bats, as the greatest threat to the species.

During the reopened comment period, the Service seeks information regarding the interpretation of scientific studies cited in the proposed rule, along with any additional scientific information not already considered in the proposal. We also seek information on northern long-eared bat population trends, information on white-nose syndrome and current or planned efforts to conserve the species.

Previously submitted comments or information on the proposed rule do not need to be resubmitted. The Service has incorporated previously submitted comments into the public record and will fully consider them in the preparation of a final determination. A final determination concerning the proposed listing will consider all written comments and any additional information received.

Written comments and information concerning the listing proposal will be accepted until August 29, 2014, and may be submitted by one of the following methods:

(1) Electronically: Federal Rule-making portal - <http://www.regulations.gov> - In the Keyword box, enter Docket No. FWS-R5-ES-2011-0024, which is the docket number for the rulemaking. Then, in the Search panel on the left side of the screen, under the Document Type heading, click on the Proposed Rules link to locate this document. You may submit a comment by clicking on "Send a Comment or Submission." If your comments will fit in the provided comment box, please use this feature of <http://www.regulations.gov>, as it is most compatible with our comment review procedures. If you attach your comments as a separate document, our preferred file format is Microsoft Word. If you attach multiple comments (such as form letters), our preferred format is a spreadsheet in Microsoft Excel; or

(2) By hard copy: Submit by U.S. mail or hand-delivery to: Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS-R5-ES-2011-0024; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, MS 2042-PDM; Arlington, VA 22203.

The Service will accept and consider comments and information received or postmarked on or before the closing date. Comments submitted electronically using the Federal eRulemaking Portal must be received by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on the closing date.

Please send your comments **only** by the methods described above. The Service will not accept verbal comments left on phone voicemail or comments sent to other postal or email addresses. The Service will post all information received on <http://www.regulations.gov>, which can include personal information provided with comments.

The northern long-eared bat is found across much of the eastern and north central United States. Before the emergence of white-nose syndrome, the species was found in 39 states, including the District of Columbia, and all Canadian provinces from the Atlantic Ocean west to the southern Yukon Territory and eastern British Columbia. The species is most abundant in the eastern United States and becomes increasingly rare moving to the western states.

White-nose syndrome has killed an estimated 5.5 million cave-hibernating bats in the Northeast, Southeast, Midwest and Canada. Populations of the northern long-eared bat in some caves in the Northeast have declined by 99 percent since symptoms of white-nose syndrome were first observed in 2006.

For more information about the northern long-eared bat, go to <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/endangered/mammals/nlba/index.html>.

Information on white-nose syndrome may be found at <http://whitenosesyndrome.org>.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service works with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. For more information, visit www.fws.gov, or connect with us through any of these social media channels:



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