

Dear Interested Party:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is reopening the comment period on our October 2, 2013, proposed rule to list the northern long-eared bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*) as endangered under the Endangered Species Act for an additional 30 days. We recently received additional information from state agencies within the range of the species; reopening the comment period will allow the public to review this information and provide comments on our proposed rule in light of that information. Additionally, the public may comment on any aspect of the proposed rule and provide new information, if available. Notice of the comment period re-opening published in the *Federal Register* on November 18, 2014, and the public comment period will end on December 18, 2014.

The states, through regional chapters of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, provided letters to the Service. The Midwest and Southeast Chapters of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, along with regional State Forester groups, provided one letter and the Northeast Chapter of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies provided another letter. Those letters are available online at <http://www.regulations.gov> at Docket No. FWS-R5-ES-2011-0024, or by mail from the Twin Cities Ecological Services Field Office:

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Twin Cities Ecological Services Field Office
4101 American Boulevard East
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Telephone 612-725-3548

The northern long-eared bat is found across much of the eastern and north central United States, and all Canadian provinces from the Atlantic Ocean west to the southern Yukon Territory and eastern British Columbia. The primary threat to the northern long-eared bat is white-nose syndrome a disease that has killed an estimated 5.5 million cave-hibernating bats in the Northeast, Southeast, Midwest and Canada. Although there is ongoing discussion in the scientific community as to how white-nose syndrome may spread throughout the species' range, our current model predictions suggest it will likely spread throughout the entire continental United States.

We intend that any final action resulting from the proposal be as accurate as possible and based on the best available scientific and commercial data. We are particularly interested in additional information and comment regarding:

- (1) The northern long-eared bat's biology, range and population trends, including:
 - (a) Habitat requirements for feeding, breeding and sheltering;
 - (b) Genetics and taxonomy;
 - (c) Historical and current range, including distribution patterns;
 - (d) Historical and current population levels, and current and projected trends; and
 - (e) Past and ongoing conservation measures for the species, its habitat or both.

- (2) Any information on the biological or ecological requirements of the northern long-eared bat and ongoing conservation measures for the species and its habitat.
- (3) Biological, commercial trade or other relevant data concerning any threats (or lack thereof) to this species and regulations that may be addressing those threats.
- (4) Current or planned activities in the areas occupied by the species and possible impacts of these activities on this species.
- (5) Additional information regarding the threats to the northern long-eared bat under the five listing factors, which are:
 - (a) The present or threatened destruction, modification or curtailment of its habitat or range;
 - (b) Overutilization for commercial, recreational, scientific or educational purposes;
 - (c) Disease or predation;
 - (d) The inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms; and
 - (e) Other natural or manmade factors affecting its continued existence.
- (6) The reasons why areas should or should not be designated as critical habitat as provided by section 4 of the Act (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), including the possible risks or benefits of designating critical habitat, including risks associated with publication of maps designating any area on which this species may be located, now or in the future, as critical habitat.
- (7) The following specific information on:
 - (a) The amount and distribution of habitat for the northern long-eared bat;
 - (b) What areas, that are currently occupied and that contain the physical and biological features essential to the conservation of this species, should be included in a critical habitat designation and why;
 - (c) Special management considerations or protection that may be needed for the essential features in potential critical habitat areas, including managing for the potential effects of climate change;
 - (d) What areas not occupied at the time of listing are essential for the conservation of this species and why;
 - (e) The amount of forest removal occurring within known summer habitat for this species;
 - (f) Information on summer roost habitat requirements that are essential for the conservation of the species and why; and
 - (g) Information on the features and requirements of the species' winter habitat (hibernacula).
- (8) Information on the projected and reasonably likely impacts of changing environmental conditions resulting from climate change on the species and its habitat.

(9) Information on the data and reports submitted to the Service by affected states and how that information relates to our determination of whether the northern long-eared bat is an endangered or a threatened species.

Through the public comment period, the Service seeks to ensure that the best biological and commercial data, scientifically accurate analyses of those data, and reviews of recognized experts are used to determine the appropriate status of the species. You may submit comments by one of the following methods; comments must be received by December 18, 2014:

You may submit comments by one of the following methods:

(1) *Electronically*: Go to the Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. In the Search box, enter Docket No. FWS-R5-ES-2011-0024, which is the docket number for this rulemaking. You may submit a comment by clicking on "Comment Now!" Please ensure that you have found the correct rulemaking before submitting your comment.

(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, MS: BPHC; 5275 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, VA 22041-3803.

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.

For more information on the proposal to list the northern long-eared bat, the extension and the public comment period, please go to <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/endangered/mammals/nlba>.

For more information about white-nose syndrome visit www.whitenosesyndrome.org.

If you have questions or wish to discuss this document, please contact [[Insert local FO contact information](#)].