

LETTER OF INTENT RELATED TO EFFORTS TO PROMOTE CONSERVATION OF BATS IN THE UNITED MEXICAN STATES, THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, AND CANADA

BACKGROUND

Bats are among the most diverse groups of mammals in North America, with more than 150 species known from the United Mexican States (Mexico), the United States of America (USA), and Canada. Unfortunately, North American bats are facing many threats, and several species are now considered threatened or endangered in one or more countries. Threats include loss of foraging and migration habitats; loss, disturbance and destruction of roost sites, especially in caves; risks of mortality due to wind turbines and other human-related causes; direct human disturbance and/or persecution; and mortality from invasive diseases. Of particular concern in the USA and Canada, is an unprecedented crisis posed by an invasive fungus, *Pseudogymnoascus destructans*, that causes an often fatal disease called White-Nose Syndrome.

Various efforts are already underway by government agencies, environmental non-government organizations, academia, industry, and others in Mexico, the USA, and Canada to address some of these threats. For example, Mexico participates in the Latin American Network for the Conservation of Bats (RELCOM) which has developed a Strategy for the Conservation of Bats in Latin America and the Caribbean. The USA has developed “*A National Plan for Assisting States, Federal Agencies, and Tribes in Managing White-Nose Syndrome in Bats*” to provide the framework for a broad collaboration across agencies, institutions, and organizations to address all manner of actions related to White-Nose Syndrome and conservation of affected bat species. Similarly, Canada has prepared “*A National Plan to Manage White Nose Syndrome in Bats in Canada*” and convened an interagency working group to develop and implement work plans to address priority actions. In addition, several regional and local working groups have been formed to address bat conservation needs in their respective regions; various groups are working to develop recovery plans for federally listed endangered species; and other working groups have been developed to address particular threats such as mortality from wind turbines.

There is increasing recognition that these efforts and other similar activities would benefit from increased coordination and cooperation among the three countries. Many of the threats are shared across international boundaries, and strategies and approaches to address them in one country could be relevant in other regions. Cooperative efforts would result in synergies and improved efficiencies to optimize conservation efforts. Furthermore, bats of several species regularly cross international boundaries. For example, populations of several species of bats breeding in Canada migrate to the USA in winter, while other species move regularly between

Mexico and the southern USA. Conservation efforts are needed in all three countries to protect these species.

This Letter of Intent seeks to strengthen cooperation among the three countries to enhance coordination of activities as well as gathering and sharing information related to conservation of bats in North America.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Letter of Intent is to document that the Secretaría de Medio Ambiente y Recursos Naturales from the United Mexican States (SEMARNAT), with the expected participation of the Dirección General de Vida Silvestre (DGVS), the Comisión Nacional de Áreas Naturales Protegidas (CONANP), the Instituto Nacional de Ecología y Cambio Climático (INECC), the Comisión Nacional para el Conocimiento y Uso de la Biodiversidad (CONABIO) and the Procuraduría Federal de Protección al Ambiente (PROFEPA); the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), the National Park Service (NPS), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services (APHIS-WS), and the Department of Defense (DoD) from the USA; and Parks Canada and Environment Canada (EC) from Canada, hereinafter “the Agencies,” have the intention to strengthen cooperation, coordination and information sharing related to the conservation and management of all bat species in Canada, the USA, and Mexico.

FORMS OF COOPERATION

Desiring to promote cooperation in the conservation of bat populations in North America, the Agencies have reached the following understanding.

1. The Agencies intend to cooperate in bilateral and trilateral activities and, when appropriate, in regional activities to promote monitoring, research, and environmentally sustainable policies and practices in support of the conservation of bats and the ecosystems upon which their survival depend.

The forms of cooperation may include, among others:

- a. Strengthening institutional capacities to address conservation concerns that affect bats;
- b. Exchanging information on environmental best practices;

- c. Technological cooperation, including research and development, and the transfer of new technologies on mutually agreed terms;
- d. Mechanisms of promotion to improve the protection of the environment and natural resources, such as: endangered species conservation; incentives for conserving, restoring, or enhancing the environment; and public/private partnerships;
- e. Improving natural resource management;
- f. Environmental education and outreach; and
- g. Fundraising and identification of resources for conservation projects that will benefit bat populations.

2. The Agencies intend to promote improved coordination and planning in support of bat conservation in North America by appointing one person from each country to serve as a national point of contact for various activities of cooperation on bat conservation.

3. The Agencies intend to cooperate in the development of rigorous, coordinated population monitoring programs for bats that will allow for reliable inferences about the status, distribution, and population trends of bats at various spatial scales. These programs are to use methods and techniques that are most appropriate for each species in each region. In particular, the USA and Canada intend to continue developing and implementing protocols as part of a recently proposed North American Bat Monitoring Program (NABat), and working with Mexico to find ways that this can link with the Sistema Mexicano de Monitoreo Acústico (SIMMA).

4. In the development of specific cooperative activities to identify and to address conservation priorities at international, regional and national level, the Agencies may cooperate with other government agencies, educational and research institutions, non-government organizations with experience or interest in bat conservation, as well as any other stakeholders considered relevant and pertinent for the development of the referenced activities. This may be achieved through participation in a North American Bat Conservation Alliance (NABCA),

5. All activities of cooperation are subject to the availability of funds and to the applicable laws and regulations of the respective governments, in the understanding that:

- a. Each Agency is expected to provide for its own expenses;
- b. This Letter of Intent is not legally binding and cannot give rise to any liability or claim for damages by the Agencies or any third party;
- c. This Letter of Intent does not obligate funding nor allocation of resources, assets or personnel from the Agencies; and,
- d. There is no obligation on the Agencies to enter into any agreements or contracts.

6. The Agencies have the intention that all public domain technical information obtained through their cooperation be available to the public to the extent permissible under their respective laws and regulations.

7. Cooperation under this Letter of Intent is to commence upon signature by representatives of the Agencies and may continue indefinitely. Any Agency may discontinue its cooperation at any time by notification in writing to the other Agencies.

8. The Letter of Intent may be revised by joint determination of the Agencies in writing.

Signed in San Diego, California, United States of America, Thursday, the sixteenth day of the month of April of the year two thousand fifteen, in triplicate, in the Spanish and English languages.

**FOR ENVIRONMENT CANADA
OF CANADA**

/s/ SUE MILBURN-HOPWOOD
DIRECTOR GENERAL, CANADIAN WILDLIFE SERVICE

**FOR THE SECRETARIAT OF ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL RESOURCES
OF THE UNITED MEXICAN STATES**

/s/ JORGE MAKSABEDIAN DE LA ROQUETTE
DIRECTOR GENERAL OF WILDLIFE

**FOR THE FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

/s/ DAN ASHE
DIRECTOR, U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE