

1 May 2012

Dear Interested Parties:

On behalf of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), we would like to express our sincere gratitude to all who took time to comment on the recently released Draft Rangewide Indiana Bat Summer Survey Guidance. The Service received 57 comment letters during our February to March 2012 peer review period and the initial multi-agency, survey guidance team has reconvened and is reviewing all of the comments. We appreciate the thoughtful review that you provided and want to ensure you that all comments are being considered.

Overall, most commenters were pleased with the idea of incorporating an acoustic component into the current Indiana bat survey protocols and we received comments on ideas on how to best incorporate acoustic techniques. We also received comments on a range of other topics including the level of proposed effort, ability to identify bats to the species level, detector equipment and placement, surveyor qualifications, and analysis software. Some comments received were outside the scope of survey methods and focused more on requesting consistent project review guidance from the Service. Other comments requested additional information about the rationale and justification for various parts of the protocols. We appreciate all comments received and understand that changing a long-standing protocol may have caused you concern. We hope that you recognize that our goal in revising the summer survey protocols is to better protect the Indiana bat by improving our survey efficiency and effectiveness especially in areas experiencing substantial population declines. We are committed to developing protocols that detect Indiana bats to the best of our ability using a reasonable amount of effort. Again, we thank you for assisting with this effort during the peer review process.

As mentioned above, the survey guidance drafting team has read through all comments and over the next few months, they will be revising the guidance in some cases and/or drafting responses to comments to help clarify the rationale for the proposed methodologies. Although, we originally had hoped to release a revised draft guidance document in April 2012, we find it prudent to take additional time to adequately respond to your comments and are now planning to release a revised draft in the fall of 2012 in conjunction with a formal public comment period that will be announced in the Federal Register.

During the summer of 2012, the Service will continue to require and accept results from surveys following our current Indiana Bat Mist-Netting Guidelines¹. However, we encourage project sponsors to work closely with our local field offices in areas heavily impacted by white-nose syndrome to determine whether the addition of acoustic methods is recommended (as has been the case for several years by some field offices). In addition, the survey guidance team and several cooperators will be conducting some formal field-testing efforts of the draft protocols in

¹ See Appendix 5 in USFWS. 2007. Indiana Bat (*Myotis sodalis*) Draft Recovery Plan: First Revision, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Fort Snelling, MN. 258 pp. Available online [here](#).

order to address some specific concerns expressed during the peer-review process. When opportunities are available this summer, interested parties are encouraged to informally field test the 3 February 2012 version of the draft summer survey guidance and the forthcoming acoustic bat ID software² and to submit their resulting recommendations to the Service for further consideration.

Should you have any questions or wish to share field-testing results, please feel free to contact one of the Service's Indiana bat summer survey guidance team leaders, Mike Armstrong (mike_armstrong@fws.gov), Andy King (andrew_king@fws.gov) and Robyn Niver (robyn_niver@fws.gov).

Thank you again for your time, interest, and dedication to the conservation of the Indiana bat.

Sincerely,

The Indiana Bat Summer Survey Guidance Team

² We understand that beta-testing and resulting refinements to the new, automated acoustic bat identification software program being developed by the U.S. Army Engineer Research and Development Center are nearing completion. Once this free software program is publically available, it will be announced via the eastern bat working groups and made available for downloading via the Service's Region 3 Indiana bat website (<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/Endangered/mammals/inba/index.html>). The Service will also be evaluating another automated acoustic software program that is currently commercially available (<http://www.batcallid.com/index.html>).