

# News Release



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Contact: Catherine Hibbard, 413-531-4276

## **Service Provides 1 Million Dollars to States to Combat Bat-Killing Fungal Disease**

### *Funding Supports White-nose Syndrome Research, Prevention and Eradication Efforts*

Today, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced over \$1 million in grants to 37 states and the District of Columbia to help combat white-nose syndrome (WNS), a fungal disease that has killed millions of North American bats in recent years. Funds will help states find ways to prevent the spread of WNS while increasing survival rates of afflicted species.

The grants bring the total funding to states for WNS response over the last eight years to \$7 million. This financial support is part of a Service-led, cooperative, international effort involving more than 100 state, federal, tribal, academic and non-profit partners.

“White-nose syndrome has ravaged bat populations in many parts of this nation. Funding from the Service provides state fish and wildlife agencies with critically important support to manage and mitigate the spread of the disease to new areas of the country,” said Nick Wiley, President of the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and Executive Director of the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission. “The Association greatly appreciates the Service’s role in coordinating a national response to white-nose syndrome and the funding support for state responses to this wildlife disease crisis.”

First discovered in New York in the winter of 2006-2007, the fungus has now spread to 33 states and five Canadian provinces and infects eight of the top 10 agricultural producing states. Insect-eating bats keep agricultural pest populations down, saving farmers at least \$3.7 billion per year in lost crop revenue and preventing the need for spraying costly toxic chemicals. Some farmers install “bat box” homes to increase the number of bats protecting their crops.

“Bats are beneficial in many ways,” said Jeremy Coleman, National White-nose Syndrome Coordinator for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. “While state natural resource agencies are on the front lines of bat conservation, many have limited options for responding to this devastating disease without these funds. Activities supported by state WNS grants have been critical to the national response.”

For example, Alabama has no full-time staff dedicated to bat conservation. With the WNS grants, however, biologists have contributed to the national understanding of WNS by documenting the disease in a new species (the southeastern bat) for the first time this year. The biologists also discovered a large hibernation site for the federally endangered Indiana bat and

surveyed the most important hibernation area in the world for another endangered species, the gray bat.

“The WNS grants to states program is absolutely critical to our efforts to understand the disease in Alabama and contribute to the national fight against WNS,” said Nicholas Sharp, Nongame Biologist with the Alabama Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries. “Without it we simply would not have the capacity to do this work.”

In addition to developing science-based protocols and guidance for land management agencies and other partners to slow the transmission of WNS, the Service has funded many research projects to understand the disease and support sound, effective management responses, including the application of disease treatments. Priorities this year include coordination and research for WNS treatment trials in collaboration with the [Bats for the Future Fund](#), along with bat monitoring, response planning and conservation actions.

Additional information about WNS is available at [www.whitenosesyndrome.org/](http://www.whitenosesyndrome.org/). You can also learn more about WNS by following the Service’s WNS [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Flickr](#) pages.

*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](http://www.fws.gov), or connect with us through any of these social media channels:*



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