

For immediate release
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Comments sought on plan to combat deadly white-nose syndrome in bats

White-nose syndrome has killed more than a million bats in the Northeast and has spread to 11 or more states in less than four years since its discovery near Albany, N.Y. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in collaboration with other federal and state agencies, and tribal governments, is proposing a coordinated national management plan to address this critical environmental issue. The proposed plan is available for review and comment beginning October 28, 2010.

The proposed plan, a joint federal-state effort, provides a framework for WNS investigation and response. A subsequent implementation plan will identify specific actions, the entities responsible for implementation of each action, and estimated costs.

“More than 50 agencies, organizations and individuals are working in concert on the white-nose syndrome response,” said WNS National Coordinator Jeremy Coleman, Ph.D., of the Service. “The national management plan will help guide our use of limited resources wisely and efficiently in addressing this urgent threat to bats and to our environment.”

The Service will accept public comments on the proposed plan through December 26, 2010 to gather additional scientific and commercial information for consideration before the plan becomes final.

The document and additional information about WNS are available online at <http://www.fws.gov/WhiteNoseSyndrome/>. Comments may be submitted by e-mail to WhiteNoseBats@fws.gov, by mail to WNS National Coordinator, New York Field Office, 3817 Luker Road, Cortland, NY 13045-9348, or by fax to 607-753-9699.

In addition to its online availability, the proposed plan may be viewed during weekday business hours by appointment at the New York Field Office by calling 607-753-9334. Individuals who are deaf or hard-of-hearing may call the Federal Relay Service at 800-877-8339.

The proposed plan includes an overall strategy for investigating the cause of WNS and finding a way to manage it. The plan identifies key actions and the roles of federal and state agencies and other entities in addressing WNS nationally. It identifies seven focus areas of responsibility – communications, scientific and technical information dissemination, diagnostics, disease management, research coordination, disease surveillance, and conservation and recovery of affected species.

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. We are both a leader and a trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information about our work and the people who make it happen, visit <http://www.fws.gov>.

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