



May 7, 2008

Dear ,

I am writing on behalf of the Western Bat Working Group (WBWG), a non-profit consortium of state, federal, and private natural resource professionals committed to furthering the understanding and conservation of bat species across western North America.

We recognize that abandoned mines pose a considerable risk to people and we applaud and support the efforts of Abandoned Mine Lands (AML) programs at State and Federal levels that close abandoned mines for reasons of human safety and environmental reclamation. However, abandoned mines also provide valuable habitat used by most western North American bat species throughout their lives. Bats are vulnerable and may be killed when mines are permanently closed using methods that destroy habitat or exclude or entomb bat colonies. The loss of this habitat through permanent mine closures is a concern for biologists working with western bat species, including Townsend's big-eared bat (a Species of Special Concern in most Western States), California leaf-nosed bat (Species of Concern in California, Arizona and Nevada) and two species of nectar-feeding long-nosed bats in the Southwest that are federally endangered.

When mines are closed using bat-friendly gates or bats are appropriately excluded prior to permanent closures, impacts to bat populations that could move some species towards State or Federal listing are avoided. Abandoned mines can often be gated to keep people out of harms way while allowing wildlife ingress and egress with little or no increase in cost. Fortunately, several AML programs in the West have adopted bat-friendly approaches to managing mines in cooperation with the WBWG and federal, state or provincial wildlife professionals. Such conservation efforts are endorsed by the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) and we want to encourage continuation and expansion of bat conservation efforts through collaboration. We have state and provincial representatives across western North America who are employed by or work with state, provincial, or federal agencies and can help to enlist skilled individuals to provide professional assistance in addressing bat and mine related assessments, surveys, and closures.

We invite AML Personnel to contact their local WBWG representative or myself directly (<http://wbwg.org/contactus.html>) to explore how we can work together to effectively close abandoned mines and protect valuable bat habitat.

Detailed information concerning bats and mines, bat gates, and conservation partnerships to protect mines for bats can be found in the Bat Conservation International publication, "Bats and Mines" which can be found at:

<http://www.batcon.org/home/index.asp?idPage=53&idSubPage=3>

For additional related information, feel free to visit our website as well:

<http://www.wbwg.org>

Sincerely,

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