



Rita Dixon
President
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Memorandum

To: WAFWA Directors
From: Rita Dixon, President
Date: June 15, 2009
Re: **INTERIM RECOMMENDED FIELD PROCEDURES FOR PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF WHITE-NOSE SYNDROME IN BATS**

Attached you will find a copy of the protocol entitled *Interim Recommended Field Procedures for Preventing the Spread of White-nose Syndrome in Bats*. Also attached is a white-nose syndrome (WNS) brochure for broader distribution. At our recent biennial meeting held in Austin, TX, April 2009, we conducted a special working session on white-nose syndrome to strategize on how to improve the awareness of and control the potential spread of WNS to western states and provinces. WNS is a condition associated with extreme mortalities of hibernating bats in the eastern US. The term was coined because many of the affected bats were found with a white fungus on their nose, wings, ears, and/or tail membrane. Since first diagnosed, WNS has spread at an alarming rate and has now been reported in nine US states including Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, Vermont, New Hampshire, New Jersey, West Virginia, and Virginia. Mortalities associated with WNS typically affect 80–100% of bats at each site and eastern hibernacula typically house thousands to tens of thousands of bats at a single site. All bat species within the WNS affected areas have shown susceptibility to WNS. Evidence suggests that the disease will continue to spread, and therefore, all natural resource agencies must be prepared to address this serious issue.

We have seen in the Northeast that white-nose syndrome has the potential to dominate agency budgets and personnel activities. Our ability to develop and implement a preventive strategy is our best course of action. To do this, we need the involvement and insight of your nongame or wildlife diversity staff. Specifically, we ask you to:

- Include the following requirements in your application form for scientific collecting permits that involve handling bats:
 - Require permittees to follow decontamination and preventive spread protocols with all scientific collecting permits associated with bats, as described in the attached protocol or on the FWS WNS Web site (http://www.fws.gov/northeast/white_nose.html).
 - Report all geographic locations (e.g., state or province) where permittee has used any of the bat trapping or handling equipment intended for use in respective state or province.
 - List all geographic locations where permittee intends to work with bats during the time period covered by this permit, including work done outside respective state or

- province, and non-bat-handling visits to hibernacula. Permittee must notify agency of any changes in the geographic scope of work while operating under this permit.
- In the event of WNS detection in the near future, within or adjacent to this agency's jurisdiction, provide a contact phone number where permittee can be reached during the field season.

In addition, to enable the agency to quickly respond in the event that WNS is detected after the permit is issued, we recommend the addition of the following language to the application instructions:

- In the interest of preventing the spread of disease, the permittee is advised that the permit may be withdrawn before its stated expiration date.

Finally, we ask you to:

- Distribute this memo to appropriate staff to inform them of the potential threat of WNS.
- Contact state and provincial wildlife veterinarians who receive dead bats for rabies testing to make sure they are aware of physical evidence related to WNS (e.g., emaciation, white fungus on membranous features, wing scarring). In the Northeast, one of the early indications of WNS was the increase in the number of dead bats submitted to state laboratories for rabies testing. Such signs have shown to be reliable predictors of WNS infection.
- Develop agency news release on WNS.

For more information on the WBWG or links to information on WNS please review our Web site at <http://www.wbwg.org/> and feel free to contact myself or either of our WNS Committee chairs, Pat Ormsbee (pormsbee@fs.fed.us, 541-954-0083) and Toni Piaggio (batchaser@gmail.com, 970-266-6142). Thank you in advance for your attention to this important matter. Please know that WBWG is committed to assisting state and provincial wildlife agencies in addressing bat conservation issues such as WNS.

Thank you.

Rita Dixon

Attachment (2)