

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NORTHEASTERN CAVE CONSERVANCY AGAIN CLOSES CAVES DUE TO WHITE NOSE SYNDROME IN BATS

**Contacts: Robert Addis, President (518) 237-1165
 Peter Youngbaer, Vice President (802) 272-3802
 Christa Hay, Publicity Chair (518) 786-7518**

Schoharie, NY

The Northeastern Cave Conservancy (NCC) announced today it is again closing three of its caves for the winter, effective October 1, to protect hibernating bats in response to the continuing White Nose Syndrome crisis.

The affected caves are Knox Cave, Crossbones Cave, and Ella Armstrong Cave, all in New York State. Barring unforeseen circumstances, the caves will re-open in the spring.

The other caves owned and managed by the NCC will remain open for visitation under regular visitation policies. Details about all NCC caves and visitation may be found on the NCC web site at www.necaveconservancy.org.

Action by the NCC parallels that of the National Speleological Society, which is also closing its three New York cave preserves October 1 – Schoharie Caverns, Gage Cave (Barton Hill Preserve), and McFail's Cave.

The vote to close these caves was taken at the NCC's quarterly meeting Sunday, at Sam's Point Preserve, in Cragmoor, NY. NCC Board member, Al Hicks, bat specialist for the NY Department of Environmental Conservation, advised that closing later would subject bats already gathered for hibernation to unnecessary disturbance.

The NCC also heard from Carl Herzog, also with NYDEC, on the results of summer acoustical monitoring surveys. These surveys showed that certain bat species affected by White Nose Syndrome – Little Brown Bats, Northern Long-Eared Bats, Tri-colored Bats (Eastern Pipistrelles), and Indiana Bats – are virtually gone from the region due to WNS.

NCC President, Robert Addis, said, "Closing these particular caves in conjunction with the National Speleological Society caves, will allow us to study the continuing impact on the bats in these affected sites, and hopefully permit the remaining bats to begin to

recover their historic numbers.” Bats typically give birth to only one pup a year, so population recovery will take years.

White Nose Syndrome is believed to have killed well over a million bats. It has now been documented in nine states. Experts predict it will spread to more this winter.

The NCC advises all cavers to clean and decontaminate their gear and clothing according to the protocols found on the US Fish and Wildlife web site at www.fws.gov/northeast/whitenosemessage.html. In addition, any gear and clothing used here should not be taken out of the region, in an effort to contain the disease.

The Northeastern Cave Conservancy is committed to the conservation, study, management, and acquisition of caves and karst areas having significant geological, hydrological, biological, recreational, historical, or aesthetic features. The NCC owns and manages nine non-commercial caves in the northeast.