

U.S. Forest Service
White-nose Syndrome Interim Responsive Strategy
July 2010

- Work with your wildlife, public affairs, recreation, invasive species, cave and mine staffs; and State and other Federal agency partners; involved publics, such as local caving groups; to internally and externally develop and launch White-nose Syndrome (WNS) awareness campaigns at local and regional levels. Refer to the attached R9 WNS Communications Plan as an example of how WNS awareness and Forest Service management and research activities can be shared. Other helpful materials can be found at the following sites:
 - <http://www.fws.gov/WhiteNoseSyndrome/>
 - <http://www.wbwg.org/>
 - <http://www.caves.org/WNS/index.htm>
 - <http://www.batcon.org/>
 - http://www.nwhc.usgs.gov/disease_information/white-nose_syndrome/

- Evaluate and prioritize cave and abandoned mines value as habitat for bat species, for management that is needed to appropriately protect bats and other cave resources, and to identify bat-free caves where recreational caving might be able to be done without implicating or involving WNS. With our partners, continue to monitor bat populations, hibernacula and other bat habitats to provide needed baseline information and to inform future management decisions. Incorporate WNS surveillance as part of these efforts to insure early detection of the disease.

- Immediately apply decontamination procedures for visitors to show caves. Collaborate with concessionaires, grottos, and other partners to apply decontamination procedures for visitors to show caves or to other sites that draw large numbers of public users.

- Prepare for and apply decontamination at all USFS abandoned mines and caves by October 1, 2010. Refer to and use the attached Decontamination Procedures for NFS Lands, which includes criteria to prioritize sites for surveillance, decontamination and possible closure. Also refer to these [USFWS White-Nose Syndrome Decontamination Protocols for Researchers](#).

- Carefully evaluate whether restricting access to caves and abandoned mines on National Forest System lands is appropriate to minimize the spread of WNS in your Region. Before issuing closure orders, consider their effectiveness and level of public support relative to using voluntary restrictions and applying decontamination procedures.

Closure orders for abandoned mines should provide exemptions for persons with authorization for activities granted by the Mining Law. Other access control exemptions should be for:

- search and rescue,
- necessary and sanctioned WNS-related monitoring, research surveys and underground abandoned mine land surveys that are supervised by qualified Forest Service or other personnel, and
- caves and abandoned mines where the Forest Service can ensure decontamination protocols are being followed by the public, or where the Forest Service is sure that recreational caving can be done with no potential WNS impacts to bats.

Coordinate with the BLM, FWS, states, concessionaires, grottos and other partners in access control decision-making. Consult this WNS Implementation Guide for related information and considerations:

http://www.fws.gov/northeast/pdf/WNS_SDM_Area_3_user_guide_2009.pdf

- Develop interdisciplinary teams to develop regional WNS response plans that tier to the Interagency WNS National Response Plan (release is pending).