

## **2012 Request for Proposals for White-Nose Syndrome Research**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is pleased to announce the availability of new funding for projects related directly to the investigation and management of white-nose syndrome (WNS). This opportunity is open to all State and Federal agency personnel, as well as non-governmental organizations, university, and private researchers. For information on WNS and details of currently funded projects, please see: <http://www.fws.gov/WhiteNoseSyndrome/>

### **AWARD INFORMATION**

We anticipate that up to \$1 million will be available for high priority research projects through this request for proposal (RFP) process, dependent on future budget conditions. We expect to announce awards in **February 2012**, and the earliest start date for funded projects may likely be **1 May 2012**.

Before submitting a proposal for WNS funds, please carefully review all the information and instructions in this RFP.

### **BACKGROUND**

Evidence of the continued spread of WNS was documented this past winter (2010/2011), and the number of affected bat hibernacula continued to grow. As of 1 September 2011, 19 states and four Canadian provinces are known to have one or more locations that are either affected by WNS or to present evidence suggestive of the fungus *Geomyces destructans* (Gd), including New York, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Virginia, Maryland, Tennessee, Delaware, Missouri, Oklahoma, Indiana, Kentucky, Maine, North Carolina, Ohio, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia. Surveys in affected areas continue to reveal population declines associated with the disease, and evidence to date suggests that affected bat populations are not likely to stabilize or recover in the immediate future. The Service has targeted up to \$1 million, to investigate critical gaps in our understanding of WNS that hinder our ability to manage the disease (funds were made available from internally awarded FY2011 funds). The Service has collaborated with the WNS working groups and the oversight committees established under the WNS National Plan to develop the list of research priorities presented below.

### **2012 PRIORITIES**

Through this request, we intend to fund research that addresses the following three areas of investigation (priorities are not ranked). The questions that follow are intended as a guide, but should not be considered to be comprehensive:

- 1. Understanding the timing and/or reservoirs for Gd transmission, and the parameters that correlate with apparent survival and/or susceptibility of bats with/to WNS:**
  - Which season(s) is the most critical for Gd transmission or movement?
  - Are there site characteristics or biological parameters that correlate with increased bat survival and/or infection and observed spread in North America?

2. **The general progression of fungal growth or disease expression within a site:**
  - Can we define a threshold of infection and/or identify differences in fungal load among different species within a hibernaculum?
  - Do disease onset and/or prevalence change over time at contaminated sites, and does earlier annual onset correlate with survival/mortality rates?
  
3. **Identification of non-chemical control options to reduce the severity of WNS among wild bats:**
  - Is there a biological means to disrupt transmission, disrupt/kill Gd, or otherwise decrease infection rates and/or bat mortality?
  - Can survival of bats with WNS, or Gd loads within a site, be impacted by environmental manipulations?

### **APPLICANT REQUIREMENTS**

Failure to comply with the following requirements may result in forfeiture of grant eligibility. Projects must be completed within two (2) years of notification of funding, with the exception of a deadline of 30 September 2012 for some Federal agencies.

Prior to submitting a proposal, the applicant(s) must contact all contributing partners, as appropriate, including State natural resource agency personnel, Federal biologists and resource managers, and relevant local landowners, to discuss the proposed project and ensure that the work can be conducted if funded (e.g., necessary samples can be collected, required permits can be issued, etc.). Affirmation of support for all partners must be provided on the cover page (see Format below). The appropriate Service WNS Coordinator for the region in which the project is proposed should also be notified of the proposal submission. The application must identify any State or Service support required to conduct field work, collect data, or interpret results.

All participants of funded projects must procure all necessary Federal, State, and local permits, and landowner permissions prior to project initiation.

Funded Principal Investigators (PIs) will be expected to demonstrate compliance with the Animal Welfare Act, with satisfactory review of animal use protocols by an established Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (as appropriate).

To maintain consistency in diagnostic reporting, all PIs must follow established diagnostic protocols or demonstrate that the protocols used in the proposed research perform equally well as published standard methods.

Each funded PI must obtain a Dun & Bradstreet (DUNS) number for the project and register at <http://www.ccr.gov>.

## **PROPOSAL REQUIREMENTS and FORMAT**

A proposal must **not exceed 15 pages** in length, including cover page, executive summary, figures and tables, an itemized budget, and supplemental information on PI qualifications, matching or existing funds, etc. The page limit does not include SF-424 or other required forms.

Proposals must include the following sections:

- 1) **Cover Page:** One page containing the project title, PI(s) and respective affiliations/contact information, the total amount of the request and the total amount of the project (if different), the timeline of the project, and a statement affirming that all PIs and key collaborators are aware of the project and agree to the terms of the proposal (including an acknowledgement of sample collection terms and requirements).
- 2) **Executive Summary:** A one page summary of the proposed project that outlines objectives, strengths, implications for management, and the total budget (broken down by year, if applicable). The summary must be suitable for public release on the USFWS website.
- 3) **Body of the Proposal:**
  - Introduction
    - Brief background and problem statement
    - The objectives, including hypotheses tested as appropriate, and anticipated products
    - How the project directly addresses a priority, or priorities, identified above
  - Methods
    - A detailed description of target species and all animal handling, holding, treatment, disturbance, or anticipated euthanasia practices (as appropriate)
    - The timeline of all project activities/tasks in support of objectives
  - Discussion
    - The application of anticipated results and direct implications for disease management
    - The relation, if any, of the project to existing research efforts
    - Implications to the WNS investigation if this project is not funded at this time
  - Budget
    - The budget, with justification, broken down by objective and year, including outside funding and indirect costs (not recommended to exceed 17.5%, see below)
    - The amount and source of any matching funds (matching funds are not required) and any partner contributions
- 4) **PI Qualifications:** A statement detailing the qualifications of Principle Investigators, partner organizations, and key collaborators.

Proposals must be accompanied by all required forms (SF-424, SF-424A, SF-424B - see <http://www.grants.gov>). Proposals written with a font smaller than 12 pt. will not be accepted.

## **PROPOSAL REVIEW**

A panel of Service and other Federal and State agency representatives will review the proposals and recommend proposals to the Service for funding. Outside experts will be solicited to review specific proposals as needed. Submitters are welcomed to provide a list of reviewers who are especially qualified to review a proposal, or to identify individuals who they would prefer not to review their project (this is optional).

Project rank will be based upon how closely the project meets the 2012 priorities addressed in this RFP, the timeliness of the proposed work, the likelihood of successfully achieving the anticipated results, the significance of the contribution of the project to the WNS investigation, and cost in relation to benefits. While not a requirement, the use of matching funds and partnerships to augment project resources is encouraged, and will be considered in the ranking process. Minimization of overhead and other indirect costs is also encouraged, and will be considered in the ranking process. Indirect costs in excess of 17.5% are not likely to be competitive and may not be supported. All applicants will be notified of the final disposition of their proposals. Applicants must be in good standing on all previously awarded Federal grant agreements to be eligible to receive additional funds.

Funded applicants will be required to provide semiannual and final project reports. The *semiannual reports* should be summaries of approximately 1-2 pages, must be suitable for public distribution, and should include statements about project progress and unexpected setbacks or challenges. The *final report* must be written in research manuscript format and include an executive summary, introduction, methods, results, discussion, conclusions, literature cited, and final budget details. The final project report is due within 90 days from the end of the grant and must be approved by the Service prior to final payment.

Funded applicants must be aware that any deviations from the procedures or objectives specified in an approved project proposal must be presented to, and approved by, the Service before implementing any such deviations.

## **DEADLINE AND AWARD DETAILS**

**Closing date:** 4 December 2011. Proposals must be submitted by **midnight on 4 December** to be considered for review.

**Estimated number of awards:** 5

**Estimated total program funding:** up to \$1,000,000

**Award ceiling:** \$350,000

**Award floor:** \$30,000

These details will be available for download in PDF format at the following URL:

<http://www.fws.gov/WhiteNoseSyndrome/>