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DEDICATED TO THE EXPLORATION, STUDY, AND CONSERVATION OF CAVES

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**NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY CALLS FOR DETAILS ON U.S. FISH
AND WILDLIFE SERVICE BAT DEATH ESTIMATE**

NSS SAYS ESTIMATE IS TOO HIGH

The National Speleological Society today called on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to publicly release its data a methodology for how the agency arrived at its recent estimate that “at least 5.7 to 6.7 million bats have now died from white-nose syndrome.”

In a six-page letter to USFWS Director Daniel Ashe, the NSS laid out its own research indicating the federal estimate is significantly higher than available information would support. Further, the Society said that simply releasing a raw number is not helpful in determining whether the disease spread is accelerating, remaining steady, or slowing down.

Peter Youngbaer, White Nose Syndrome Liaison for the NSS, said, “Public accountability and good science both demand transparency, so that the decisions we all make in our responses to WNS are evidence-based, and subject to scientific scrutiny.”

In its press release, the USFWS said that people meeting at a conference in Pennsylvania recently came up with the new estimate. However, Youngbaer said, the release contained absolutely no details as to how that estimate was calculated.

“We have no new state by state data, no new information year by year, or any other indication of what would drive this estimate,” he added.



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Youngbaer did acknowledge that the three-year-old estimate of “more than a million” dead bats had long been in need of updating, and that the Society had been among those asking for such an update for over a year.

“The stakes are high,” Youngbaer said. “Management and conservation decisions are being made all the time, such as closing publicly-owned caves to the public that paid for them, telling a private landowner what they can do with their own land, or telling a commercial cave owner what they can do with their own cave. The impact on species conservation and local and regional economic activity can be significant. It is imperative that the information that drives these decisions be as accurate and defensible as possible. We hope the USFWS will be forthcoming quickly with the information we've requested.”

The seventy-year-old National Speleological Society has more than 10,000 members nationwide. It is a non-profit membership organization dedicated to the scientific study of caves and karst; protecting caves and their natural contents through conservation, ownership, stewardship, and public education; and promoting responsible cave exploration and fellowship among those interested in caves.

The NSS has been involved in the White Nose Syndrome investigation since the disease was first discovered in caves the Society owns in New York State, and has funded sixteen WNS research projects from funds the Society has raised.