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Intergovernmental Executive Committee Convened To Lead International White-Nose Syndrome Response

Members of a new intergovernmental executive committee tasked with implementation of the white-nose syndrome (WNS) national plan met in late December to discuss the coordinated national response to this deadly wildlife disease. WNS has killed more than one million bats in the Northeast, and has spread rapidly across the United States and into Canada since its discovery in 2007.

The White-Nose Syndrome Executive Committee will provide oversight across participating state and federal agencies and tribal governments to ensure consistency and coordination in management action, policy interpretation, communication, and collection of scientific information related to WNS.

Co-chaired by the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (AFWA) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), the committee also includes representatives from five Native American tribes, four states, and six federal agencies in addition to the Service: U.S. Geologic Survey, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service and Department of Defense. The committee will also include representatives from federal wildlife management agencies in Canada and Mexico.

“The Committee will provide the cooperative leadership necessary for the implementation of the national plan, and an opportunity to build on the science and work that has been ongoing since discovery of WNS,” said Dr. Jon Gassett, Commissioner, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources and AFWA co-chair of the WNS Executive Committee.

“The cooperative response to this unprecedented wildlife disease has been tremendous,” said Marvin Moriarty, executive committee co-chair and Northeast Regional Director for the Service. “But as WNS continues to spread, the work of this team to ensure we are working closely to leave no stone unturned will be critical to conserving North American bat species.”

The committee’s work to implement the national plan will include:

- Guiding cooperative intergovernmental leadership in response to WNS,
- Providing oversight across participating agencies and organizations to ensure consistency in management, science, policy decisions, and funding,
- Addressing need for intra-organizational resources, and
- Ensuring exceptional scientific and technical expert representation in WNS organizational structure.

The national plan, which was open for public comment from October 27, 2010 through December 26, 2010, will be finalized in early 2011. For more information, visit <http://www.fws.gov/WhiteNoseSyndrome/>.

The Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies represents North America's fish and wildlife agencies to advance sound, science-based management and conservation of fish and wildlife and their habitats in the public interest. For more information about our work and member agencies, visit <http://www.fishwildlife.org>.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service works with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and a trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals, and commitment to public service. For more information about our work and the people who make it happen, visit <http://www.fws.gov>.

-FWS-

White-nose Syndrome Executive Committee

Co-Chairs:

Jon Gassett, Commissioner, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources

Marvin Moriarty, Regional Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Northeast Region

Members:

Peter Boice, Deputy Director, Natural Resources, Department of Defense

Arnold Coyote Runs, Crow Tribe

Thomas J. DeLiberto, National Wildlife Disease Coordinator, Animal Plant Health Inspection
Service, Wildlife Services

Bob Duncan, Executive Director of the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

Trudy Ecoffey, Oglala Sioux (Pine Ridge Reservation)

Steve Ferrell, Director of the Wyoming Game and Fish Department

Bert Frost, Associate Director, Natural Resource Stewardship and Science, National Park
Service

Joel Holtrop, Deputy Chief, National Forest System, U.S. Forest Service

Anne Kinsinger, Associate Director, Biology, U.S. Geological Survey

Mike Lavoie, Fish and Wildlife Biologist, Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians

Mark Reiter, Director of the Division of Fish and Wildlife, Indiana Department of Natural
Resources

Patricia Riexinger, Director of the Division of Fish, Wildlife, and Marine Resources, New York
State Department of Environmental Conservation

Adam Ringia, Natural Resources Manager, Pueblo of Aguna

Linda Rundell, New Mexico State Director, Bureau of Land Management

International Members:

Canada, TBD

Mexico, TBD

DRAFT WNS Organization Structure (v.7.5)

Executive Committee

- Executive oversight of mgmt. and science
- Authority and oversight on policy decisions
- Coordination across agencies to ensure consistency and communication
- Support of agency efforts
- Oversight of commitment of funds
- Congressional relations

Steering Committee

- Composed of lead policy personnel from state, federal, and tribal agencies
- Resource allocation and funding mechanisms
 - Decisions on management and policy

Stakeholder Committee

- Academics and Representatives from partnering NGOs
- Advise committees on relevant matters
 - Provide technical info by request
 - Represent organization-level interests

Technical Review Team

- Assess Mgmt and Surveillance plans
- Review project proposals
- Review protocols

Coordination Team

- National coordinator, regional coordinators, and Working Group leads
- Coordinate and guide Working Group actions
 - Provide recommendations to Steering Committee
 - Discuss and prioritize research needs

Working Groups:

Etiology and Epidemiological Research

- Establish WNS Etiology
- Enhance understanding of pathogenesis
- Enhance understanding of interactions between pathogen, host, and environment
- Evaluate the ecological consequences of WNS

Data and Technical Information Mgmt

- Standardize data collection & reporting
- Develop database for info sharing
- Integrate existing data

Disease Management

- Reduce transmission risks
- Anthropogenic
- Bat-to-bat
- Environmental
- Eliminate *G.d.* from infected individuals
- Limit adverse ecological impacts

Conservation and Recovery

- Population Monitoring
- Develop criteria for prioritizing conservation actions
- ID best conservation practices

Communications and Outreach

- Increase awareness of bat ecology and impacts of WNS
- Educate public and agency partners through coordinated outreach and in-reach activities

Diagnostics

- ID Labs and capacity
- ID time constraints
- Standardize lab tests and interpretation
- Develop field and lab tests

Disease Surveillance

- ID data needs
- Develop standards for data collection and reporting

