



# BLM NEWS RELEASE

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Bureau of Land Management  
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## **BLM Gears Up to Help Prevent Spread of White-nose Syndrome in Bats**

Today the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) announced an interim strategy to help the agency respond to the anticipated occurrence of white-nose syndrome (WNS) on BLM-administered lands nationwide. It is anticipated this strategy will be in place until more detailed guidance is developed, including applicable components of the Interagency National Response Plan (INRP) effort being led by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in which BLM is an active participant.

WNS was first observed in February 2006 in a cave roughly 40 miles west of Albany, New York, when a cave visitor photographed hibernating bats with an unusual white substance on their muzzles and reported the presence of several dead bats. The following winter, New York Department of Environmental Conservation biologists documented hundreds of cases of bats exhibiting signs of the syndrome in several more caves. The fungus associated with the disease has now been reported as far west as Missouri and Oklahoma. Mortalities at affected sites in the Northeast have ranged from 80-100 percent of hibernating bats and have affected six species of bats, including one endangered species. The fungus has also been observed on live bats in an additional three species. More than a million hibernating bats have died since the disease first appeared.

“The BLM administers thousands of caves and abandoned mines, and bats use many of them for hibernation or roosting,” said BLM Director Bob Abbey. “Working together with stakeholders and our agency partners, we hope to be able to prevent or contain the spread of this devastating disease.”

The BLM already discourages the public from entering underground abandoned mine features on public lands through its “Stay Out, Stay Alive” campaign. In addition to the risks of injury or death associated with entering abandoned mines, exploring mines and caves where bats live increases the likelihood of spreading the fungus thought to be responsible for causing WNS.

Guidance within the interim strategy released by the BLM today addresses the following elements:

- Coordination and outreach with appropriate internal and external stakeholders to prevent or contain the spread of WNS, especially in the area of identifying caves and abandoned mine features with important bat resources.

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- State Director consideration of access restrictions for caves and abandoned mines on BLM-administered lands, suggested to be targeted at sites with important bat resources.
- Adherence to current BLM containment and decontamination procedures when entering caves and abandoned mine features.
- Emphasis on ongoing survey and inventory efforts under the BLM's Abandoned Mine Land Program.
- Participation in interagency groups to develop WNS response plans at the state level.
- Recommendations for most appropriate and feasible locations to test for the presence of WNS.

The BLM will continually assess the effectiveness of this policy and implement adaptive strategies, as appropriate.

The BLM manages more land - more than 245 million acres - than any other Federal agency. This land, known as the National System of Public Lands, is primarily located in 12 Western states, including Alaska. The Bureau, with a budget of about \$1 billion, also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. The BLM's multiple-use mission is to sustain the health and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. The Bureau accomplishes this by managing such activities as outdoor recreation, livestock grazing, mineral development, and energy production, and by conserving natural, historical, cultural, and other resources on public lands.

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