



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
Colorado State Office
2850 Youngfield Street
Lakewood, Colorado 80215-7210
www.co.blm.gov



In Reply Refer To:
1792 (CO-933)

MAR 27 2013

Dear Interested Party:

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Colorado State Office is preparing the BLM Colorado White-Nose Syndrome Adaptive Management Strategy and Environmental Assessment.

White-Nose Syndrome (WNS) is a fungal disease that has killed more than 5.5 million bats in the eastern third of North America during the past six years and continues to spread south and west. Cave-hibernating bats are especially vulnerable because underground caves and mines provide the cool, moist conditions favorable for the fungus to thrive. The BLM administers hundreds of caves and abandoned mines in Colorado, many of which are used by bats for hibernation or roosting. *Geomyces destructans*, the fungus associated with the disease, has recently been reported as far west as Oklahoma.

The BLM Colorado State Office is developing an adaptive management strategy to limit the potential introduction and impacts of WNS in BLM-administered caves and abandoned mines, and put a response plan in place in the event WNS spreads into Colorado. Adaptive management principles will enable the BLM, in conjunction with its partners, to use the best available science to reduce the chance of *Geomyces destructans* introduction and spread of WNS in Colorado.

The goal of the BLM Colorado White-Nose Syndrome Adaptive Management Strategy is to reduce the potential for the spread of WNS, while providing opportunities for recreation and scientific research. Building off national guidance provided in the Washington Office White Nose Syndrome Instruction Memorandum 2010-181, the BLM Colorado State Office is examining a comprehensive suite of management actions to address WNS. Below are examples of approaches that may be considered in the Environmental Assessment:

- Identifying triggers (e.g. proximity of WNS, biological conditions) for administrative closures and seasonal restrictions;
- Inventorying and monitoring sites with important bat resources (e.g. hibernaculum sites, maternity sites, swarming sites);
- Monitoring and researching recreational caving;
- Establishing a permit system for recreational and research uses;
- Implementing decontamination protocols;
- Monitoring for WNS occurrences; and
- Conducting outreach and education to user and interest groups.

The BLM is seeking public input on issues and management actions that should be considered in the Environmental Assessment. The BLM is providing a 30-day scoping period from March 28, 2013, to April 26, 2013. The public should submit comments during the 30-day scoping period to ensure full consideration in the Environmental Assessment.

Written comments must be submitted to Bruce Rittenhouse, BLM Colorado State Office, 2850 Youngfield Street, Lakewood, CO 80215. Comments may be submitted in person at the above address from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm, Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Comments may also be sent via email to blm_co_wnscolorado@blm.gov. Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, please be advised that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold from public review your personal identifying information, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

For more information, please contact Bruce Rittenhouse, BLM Colorado Branch Chief for Natural Resources, at (303) 239-3804.

Sincerely,



Acting

Leigh D. Espy/Acting
Deputy State Director
Resources and Fire