



White-Nose Syndrome (WNS) & Bats: DoD Readiness on Military Installations

Project # 11-445

Background:

White-nose Syndrome (WNS) is causing the most precipitous decline in North American wildlife this century. In a February 17, 2012 press release, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimated more than 5.5 million bats have died from White-nose Syndrome. Twenty-five species throughout North America are likely at risk. On November 16, 2011 the Director of Environmental Management, Office of Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Installations and Environment) issued a memorandum regarding the management of WNS in bats on DoD lands. The memo encourages Military Services to develop guidance to address WNS at their installations to mitigate potential military mission impacts and integrate actions with their Integrated Natural Resource Management Plans.

For more than a decade, DoD has invested money, energy and expertise in protecting endangered species installations. Bat conservation has been particularly successful, from early partnerships with Bat Conservation International (BCI) training DoD biologists to habitat assessments and protection activities on military land across the country. White-nose Syndrome could nullify these years of collaboration and investment.

Objective:

Site by site, species by species, agency by agency, installation by installation, university by university—many constituents are following developments closely. This project was designed to share critical updates and foster cooperative strategies for dealing with this potentially catastrophic disease. DoD partners are very important land stewards for a considerable amount of bat habitat in the WNS impact zone.

Summary of Approach:

Through interactive dialogue and distributed materials, we provided guidance to DoD installations to help them prepare for the arrival of WNS. We conducted a 3-day workshop in August 2011 with Fort Huachuca for DoD installations and their partners. The workshop consisted of both classroom and field discussions. We explored tactics in the field, viewed bat habitat, and discussed how management activities may be impacted at these sites and how military installation procedures

shape planning. Workshop materials were distributed to all participants on a DVD.

Benefit:

Many U.S. military installations provide habitat to America's bats—including endangered species such as the Indiana and gray bats. Protection and conservation of plants, wildlife, and habitat—particularly related to threatened and endangered species—on DoD land is becoming an increasingly important mission for all branches of the military, including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. BCI's work in the past year conducted with support from the DoD Legacy Program has raised the level of awareness among partners about the role of the military in the growing response to WNS. The activities outlined above and funded in part by the Legacy Program have laid the framework for helping Military Services develop a response strategy to WNS. All of the efforts to date support the management recommendations in INRMPs in regions where WNS is taking a toll.



Accomplishments:

DoD Readiness efforts to date include 1) WNS workshop held in Tucson and Fort Huachuca, AZ 2) created and distributed DVD/print materials to assist installations in determining the presence of WNS and provide protocols for subsequent actions; 3) developed and distributed a map of relative risk for WNS to installations; 4) guidance provided to installations on submitting current/future installation bat data (if they choose to submit data). All information and video from the workshop is posted on the DENIX website (www.denix.osd.mil).

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