



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

Project # 10-445

Background:

White-nose Syndrome (WNS) is causing the most precipitous decline in North American wildlife this century. WNS has killed an estimated 1 million bats in the past 5 years and 25 species throughout North America likely are at risk. At the June 2008 Integrated Natural Resource Management Plans (INRMPs)/State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP) meeting in Boston, White-nose Syndrome was recognized as an emerging priority issue by attending representatives of Department of Defense (DoD) installations, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and state fish and wildlife agencies. Military installations provide habitat to many of America's bats—including endangered species such as the Indiana and gray bats.

For more than a decade, DoD has invested money, energy and expertise in protecting endangered species present on installations. Bat conservation has been particularly successful, from early partnerships with BCI to train DoD biologists to habitat assessments and protection activities on military land across the country. Collaborative bat conservation initiatives have also included work in caves and mines on western bases and training lands to recent training (by military professionals) of bat experts in the use of thermal imaging technology the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers modified specifically for use in counting federally endangered bat species. 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 expansion of WNS. We conducted a 3-day workshop in November 2010 at Fort Campbell, KY targeted directly to DoD installations and their partners. The workshop consisted of both classroom

discussion and field discussions. We explored tactics in the field, provided an opportunity for participants to view bat habitat, and provided a forum for discussion of 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 military installations and Department of Defense 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. For example, at the 2009 WNS Symposium, the banner that greeted all participants at the event credited DoD with sponsorship and support of national WNS programming. The meetings and planning events outlined above and funded in part by the Legacy Program have laid the framework for helping the military 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 Nashville, TN and Fort Campbell, KY from November 1-3, 2011; 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 desire to input their information into a database).

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