

Briefing Statement

Bureau: National Park Service

Issue: White-nose Syndrome Update

Date: June 2011

Key Issue

- *Geomyces destructans* has been detected in four NPS units: Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area (Pennsylvania and New Jersey), Great Smoky Mountains National Park (Tennessee and North Carolina), New River Gorge National River (West Virginia), and Ozark National Scenic Riverways (Missouri). Caves and mines in these units are closed.
- Guidance documents have been issued to parks by the NPS Deputy Director in April 2009 and updated in September 2010, to direct management of WNS and cave use. In parks where cave visitation is allowed, official NPS guidance recommends that access to caves require a permit or tour ticket and that visitors be screened prior to cave entry and gear disinfected as necessary.
- Commercial cave operations (i.e., guided tours) in parks where WNS has not been detected, such as Mammoth Cave and Carlsbad National Parks, remain open.

Background

- NPS veterinarians and park managers have been involved in WNS surveillance and management since 2008.
- Over 3,900 known caves are found in 81 NPS units. An estimated 3,100 mine sites have been documented in 126 NPS units. All caves are potential habitat for bats.
- System-wide, all 45 species of bats in North America occur in NPS units, including seven species that are federally listed as threatened or endangered.

Current Status

- NPS has focused efforts on educating millions of visitors about cave ecosystems, bats, and the potentially devastating impacts of WNS. For example, Mammoth Cave National Park has developed a WNS information booth, educational posters, and a video that provide information to over 450,000 cave visitors per year, and Great Smoky Mountains National Park, which does not offer cave tours, has produced a WNS podcast that is available online.
- NPS works with multiple partners to investigate WNS and its impacts on bat populations by providing access to sites, samples for analyses, and assisting planning for coordinated response.
- NPS has been an active member on the interagency WNS Executive Committee and the Steering Committee developing the national WNS plan.
- Funding for WNS activities has been redirected from existing sources.

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