UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240
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Instruction Memorandum No. 2010-181

Expires: 09/30/2011

To:                  All Field Office Officials

From:              Assistant Director, Renewable Resources and Planning

Subject:          White-nose Syndrome

**Program Area**: Wildlife, Threatened and Endangered Species, Recreation, and Abandoned Mine Lands.

**Purpose**: This Instruction Memorandum (IM) provides direction on how to prepare for the anticipated occurrence of white-nose syndrome (WNS) on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) administered lands nationwide.

**Policy/Action**: It is current BLM policy, as articulated by the “stay out, stay alive” campaign, to discourage the public from entering underground abandoned mine features on public lands, as they risk injury or death, and potentially increase the risk of transferring WNS among vulnerable bat populations.

The BLM recognizes that there are knowledge gaps concerning WNS etiology and epidemiology; however, we are committed to implementing measures to prevent and reduce the impacts of WNS. The BLM may adjust its policy on WNS as more information becomes available through ongoing monitoring and research efforts.

In the meantime, an Interagency National Response Plan (INRP) for managing white-nose syndrome in bats is being drafted, and the BLM is an active participant.

Until more detailed guidance is available, implement the BLM-WNS Interim Response Strategy (Attachment 1), which includes the following guidance:

* Coordinate and conduct outreach with appropriate internal and external stakeholders to prevent or contain the spread of WNS. Identify caves and abandoned mine features (hereinafter referred to as “sites”; refer to the definitions of caves and abandoned mine features found in Attachment 2) with important bat resources (refer to all three attachments for more detail).
* Emphasize ongoing inventory efforts of Abandoned Mine Land Program Surveys.
* Consider restricting access to caves and abandoned mines on BLM-administered lands in your state. It is suggested that BLM State Directors use a targeted approach to closure that prioritizes sites with important bat resources.
* Adhere to the current version of BLM containment and decontamination procedures (refer to Attachments 1 and 2).
* Participate in interagency groups to develop state WNS response plans that consider the INRP, as appropriate.
* Recommend locations to test for the presence of WNS at a subset of the sites that have been identified as having important bat resources and support WNS research efforts where practicable and feasible within budgetary constraints.

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

**Timeframe**: This IM is effective immediately.

**Budget Impact:**  The implementation of this IM is anticipated to result in costs for a variety of BLM activities, including data review and analysis to identifying caves and abandoned mines with important bat resources, disease surveillance, response planning, cave closure (administrative and physical), decontamination protocol implementation, interagency

coordination, outreach, and education.

**Background:**WNS is a condition associated with massive mortalities of cave and mine hibernating bats and has spread at an alarming rate across the eastern United States. The fungus (*Geomyces destructans*) associated with the disease has now been reported as far west as Missouri and Oklahoma. This spread has occurred within only 3 years of the first observation of clinical signs of WNS. Mortalities at affected hibernacula in the Northeast have ranged from 80-100 percent of their 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.  The BLM administers thousands of caves and abandoned mines, many of which are used by bats for hibernation or roosting.

While the disease is not known to be harmful to people, evidence suggests that the dispersal of the *Geomyces* *destructans* fungus, considered the primary causal agent for WNS, can be transmitted via bats or people. Although bat-to-bat transfer of the fungus occurs, people may also inadvertently transfer the fungus from an affected site to an unaffected site, via spores on their clothing or gear, where it can then affect bats using the site.

Bat populations in the northeast have plummeted due to WNS, and state and Federal agency personnel and their budgets have been strained as they have struggled to react to this relatively new threat.

**Manual/Handbook Sections Affected**: None.

**Coordination:**This policy was coordinated with the Renewable Resources Directorate (WO-200), and the Divisions of Fish Wildlife and Plant Conservation (WO-230), Recreation and Visitor Services (WO-250), and Environmental Quality and Protection (WO-280).

**Contact:**If there are any questions regarding this IM, please contact Dwight Fielder, Chief, Division of Fish, Wildlife and Plant Conservation, at 202-912-7230; Andy Tenney, Deputy Division Chief, Division of Recreation and Visitor Services, at 202-912-7094; or Bill Ypsilantis, Acting Chief, Division of Environmental Quality and Protection, at

202-912-7163.

Signed by:                                                        Authenticated by:

Bud C. Cribley                                                   Robert M. Williams

Deputy Assistant Director                                 Division of IRM Governance,WO-560

Renewable Resources and Planning

3 Attachments

[1 – BLM-WNS Interim Response Strategy (3 pp)](http://www.blm.gov/style/medialib/blm/wo/Information_Resources_Management/policy/im_attachments/2010.Par.10218.File.dat/IM2010-181_att1.pdf)

[2 – BLM Containment and Decontamination Procedures (6 pp)](http://www.blm.gov/style/medialib/blm/wo/Information_Resources_Management/policy/im_attachments/2010.Par.91508.File.dat/IM2010-181_att2.pdf)

[3 – Site Feature Bat Inventory Spreadsheet (2 pp)](http://www.blm.gov/style/medialib/blm/wo/Information_Resources_Management/policy/im_attachments/2010.Par.4723.File.dat/IM2010-181_att3.xls)

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