



IDAHO FISH AND GAME GOLDSHEET

Date: January 29, 2025

Agenda Item No. 14

Agenda Item: Idaho Bats and White-Nose Syndrome

Bureau Chief Approval: SR

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Position/Title: State Wildlife Action Plan Coordinator

Background:

Bat white-nose syndrome (WNS) is a disease of hibernating bats caused by the invasive fungus *Pseudogymnoascus destructans* (*Pd*). Named for the white fungal growth on unfurred skin (e.g., muzzles, ears, wings, or tail membranes) of affected bats, WNS has killed millions of bats and is causing population-level declines in some North American bat species. The disease's impacts vary between affected species, and its impact to multiple recently or not yet exposed species remains uncertain. Although *Pd* causes disease in bats, no evidence exists that humans, pets, livestock, or other wildlife are susceptible to the disease.

In March 2016, WNS was confirmed in Washington State—the first recorded occurrence of this disease in western North America. Since then, WNS has continued to spread and has now been confirmed in 40 US states and 9 Canadian provinces. Although WNS (the disease) has not yet been confirmed in Idaho, 6 of 33 bats swabbed in October 2021 at Minnetonka Cave, a limestone show cave located in Saint Charles Canyon, Bear Lake County, Idaho, tested positive for *Pd*. Continued monitoring of this site has produced no further *Pd* detections.

The Department participates in the national coordinated effort between state, federal, and tribal agencies as well as nongovernmental and private partners in response to WNS and has been conducting both passive (e.g., rabies lab submissions) and active (e.g., hibernacula surveys, spring trapping, maternity colony surveys, pooled guano sampling) surveillance since 2009. In addition to surveillance monitoring, IDFG has also partnered with the US Geological Survey's National Wildlife Health Center to test vaccines as a potential control method against WNS.

Because the response to WNS spans multiple roles, responsibilities, and legal authorities, IDFG is collaborating with relevant partners to develop an interagency WNS response plan to facilitate the detection of *Pd* and management of WNS in the state of Idaho for bat species that hibernate in caves or other subterranean habitats.



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Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:

IDFG, under the direction of the Idaho Fish and Game Commission (Commission), is the designated authority for wildlife management in the state and is charged with the mission to preserve, protect, perpetuate, and manage all wildlife for the public interest. Idaho Code § 36-103, states that all wildlife within the state is considered property of the State of Idaho. In addition, Idaho Code §§ 36-104(b) and 36-201 authorize the Commission to adopt rules concerning the classification and protection of wildlife in the state (IDAPA 13.01.06, “Rules Governing Classification and Protection of Wildlife”). As such, all bat species in Idaho are legally protected under IDAPA 13.01.06 and classified as “Protected Nongame Species.”

Public Involvement Process:

Public will have the opportunity to comment on this agenda item at the public meeting prior to the Commission business meeting.

Justification:

This informational presentation is designed to inform Commissioners on the importance of Idaho’s bats to the state, the threat of WNS to Idaho’s bats, and the actions being taken in response to it.

Staff Recommendation:

N/A. This agenda item is for Commission information only.