

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 26, 2013

The Honorable Jack Reed  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment  
and Related Agencies  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment  
and Related Agencies  
Senate Committee on Appropriations  
125 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Reed and Ranking Member Murkowski:

As you begin work on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2014 Interior, Environmental Protection, and Related Agencies Appropriations bill, we write to urge you to address the deadly bat disease known as white nose syndrome (WNS). We are pleased that WNS funding was included in the President's FY 2014 Budget for several agencies and request the Subcommittee include significant funding for the Department of the Interior and the Forest Service to expand research and conduct new outreach and prevention efforts to combat this deadly disease.

WNS has devastated bat populations across the eastern United States and Canada and continues to spread further south. Since its emergence in 2006, WNS has killed more than 5.7 to 6.7 million bats in 22 states ranging from Maine to Oklahoma and as far south as Alabama. In the last year alone, WNS has spread to two more states. The white fungus that causes this disease develops most prominently on the muzzle of hibernating bats and results in mortality rates as high as 90 to 100 percent in hibernation caves.

The decline in bat populations is particularly alarming for the agriculture industry, as bats provide approximately \$22.9 billion in ecosystem services, including pest control. A single brown bat can eat hundreds of mosquitos as well as other insects in one night. The role that bats play as a natural pest control saves farmers billions of dollars each year and there could be significant economic losses to North American agriculture as a result of this disease.

Through FY 2013, funding has primarily been allocated for research and monitoring. While this was an important step, additional funding is required for biological and statistical research, state support, prevention work, on the ground data collection, and forest and park management. The Fish and Wildlife Service has led an extensive network of local, state, federal, and tribal organizations in staving off the spread of this disease. However, more federal organizations need resources as WNS migrates west, where federal land is much more extensive and our bat populations are even larger. The United States Geological Survey, the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Forest Service all have important roles to play in decreasing the impact of WNS.

April 26, 2013

Page 2 of 3


We cannot afford further delay in enacting programs that protect our bat populations, as the fungus that causes WNS continues to spread to more states. We therefore urge the Subcommittee to include significant and continued funding for the Department of the Interior and the Forest Service to combat WNS. We thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

PATRICK LEAHY  
United States Senator

FRANK R. LAUTENBERG  
United States Senator

  
SHERROD BROWN  
United States Senator

  
BENJAMIN L. CARDIN  
United States Senator

ROBERT P. CASEY, JR.  
United States Senator

WILLIAM "MO" COWAN  
United States Senator

TIM KAINE  
United States Senator

  
ROBERT MENENDEZ  
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JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER IV  
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RON WYDEN  
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RICHARD BLUMENTHAL  
United States Senator