



BC Speleological Federation

Best Management Practices (BMP)

WHITE NOSE SYNDROME (WNS)

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The BCSF is a federation of cave explorers, caving groups and cave scientists dedicated to the exploration, study and conservation of caves. The BCSF BMP series summarizes accepted practices to protect caves, karst and the species living in and around them.

INTRODUCTION: White Nose Syndrome (WNS) is a devastating fungal disease that causes up to 100% mortality in bat species and has killed millions of bats in North America. It first appeared in NY State in 2006 and has since spread rapidly westward into 35 states and 7 Canadian provinces. The causal fungus has been reported in three additional states. While not yet in BC, WNS was reported in nearby Washington State in 2016 and continues to spread. The majority of transmission is believed to be bat-to-bat; however, experts strongly advocate a series of practices to ensure the disease is not carried by human visitors into BC or Alberta.

The BMP listed below should guide decision makers when issuing permits, and permittees/visitors on Crown Land and in BC Parks when they go underground.

SYNOPSIS: There are four general practices that should be used by anyone venturing underground into mines or caves:

1. EQUIPMENT

Do not use equipment underground in British Columbia if it has been used previously in WNS areas. See <https://www.whitenosesyndrome.org/where-is-wns> to determine the current location and status of WNS in North America.

If you have operated in any of the affected areas, do not use the same set of equipment in BC. A separate set of caving equipment (e.g. boots, coveralls, gloves, harnesses) is required. Lights, cameras and electronic equipment too expensive to duplicate, must be thoroughly decontaminated before use in BC.

2. DECONTAMINATION

Routinely decontaminate all equipment and clothing to be used underground.

Even if you are operating only in BC, it is important to decontaminate your caving gear and electronics before changing locations. There are effective and easy decontamination procedures.

Contact batcaver@wcs.org for decontamination advice and see the following media resources:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kQjALbixJKY&feature=emb_title - Canadian National White Nose Syndrome Decontamination Protocol.

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/environment/plants-animals-and-ecosystems/wildlife-wildlife-habitat/wildlife-health/wildlife-health-documents/white-nose-syndrome-decontamination-standard-operating-procedures-march-2017.pdf> -



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Standard Operating Procedures to Minimize White Nose Syndrome Transmission. Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Forests Lands and Natural Resource Operations BC (March 2017)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kQjALbixJKY&feature=emb_title - A short but informative video on hot water and chemical wipe decontamination of caving and bat research equipment.

Written procedures may be found at http://www.cwhc-rscf.ca/docs/WNS_Decontamination_Protocol-Nov2016.pdf

3. DISURBANCE OF WILDLIFE

Maternal roosts and winter hibernation sites (hibernacula) are located in some mines and caves. These sites are vital to the survival of bat species. Roosts and sites should not be disturbed, particularly during the winter months when bats need to conserve energy. All BC bat species of which are protected under the BC Wildlife Act, and some are “species at risk” protected under Federal SARA legislation.

Contact the BC Conservation Data Centre

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/plants-animals-ecosystems/conservation-data-centre/explore-cdc-data/known-locations-of-species-and-ecosystems-at-risk/cdc-imap-theme> and the BC Speleological Federation at bcsf@cancaver.ca to determine if your planned location and activities may encounter these major bat colonies or species at risk.

4. REPORTING PROTOCOLS

Report dead or sick bats found between Nov 1 – May 31 to the BC Community Bat Program at 1-855-922-2287 or info@bcbats.ca. Regional reporting contacts and a reporting form are located at: <https://www.bcbats.ca/index.php/got-bats/report-your-bats>

5. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES and CONTACTS

BC Community Bat Program <https://www.bcbats.ca/index.php>

Government of BC <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/plants-animals-ecosystems/wildlife/wildlife-health/wildlife-diseases/white-nose-syndrome>

Government of Alberta <https://www.alberta.ca/white-nose-syndrome.aspx>

BatCaver (Wildlife Conservation Society Canada) <http://www.batcaver.org/>

BC Conservation Data Centre <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/plants-animals-ecosystems/conservation-data-centre/explore-cdc-data/known-locations-of-species-and-ecosystems-at-risk/cdc-imap-theme>

Contact for the BC Speleological Federation BCSF@cancaver.ca