



Update on Lake States Forest Management Bat Habitat Conservation Plan

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Topics We'll Cover Today

Why MN bats are in trouble

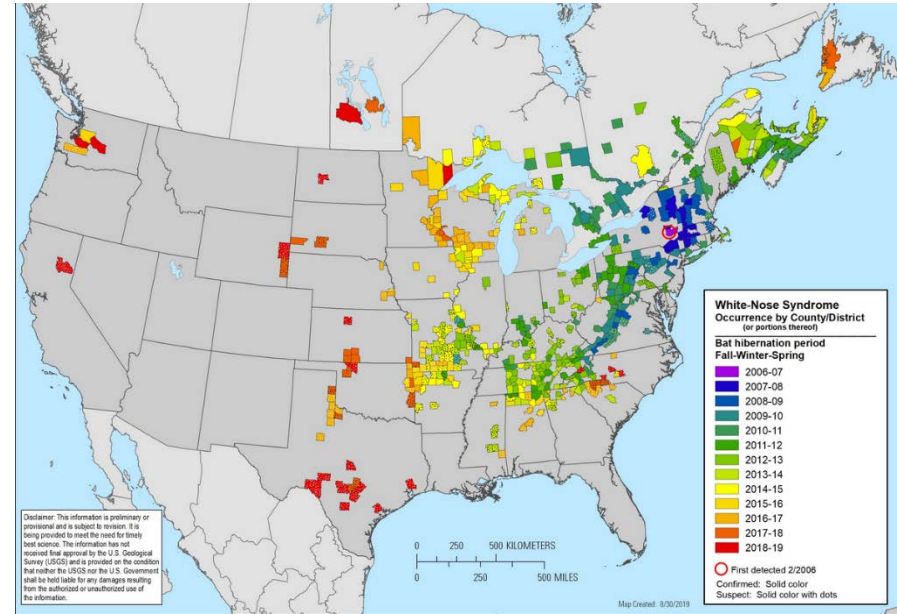
HCP development process

Highlights of chapters 4 & 5

Next steps

Why bats are in trouble

- White Nose Syndrome
 - Has been spreading since 2006
 - First mortalities in Minnesota in March 2016
 - Up to 98% mortality in Minnesota as of 2020
 - All cave-hibernating bats are impacted
 - WNS causes bats to wake from hibernation and deplete energy reserves



Bats and Forest Management Activities

- Many of Minnesota's bats spend spring, summer and fall in forests
 - Female bats give birth to young in tree roosts.
 - Before they are able to fly, young bats may be vulnerable to impact by normal forest management activities that include tree removal.

Covered Bats



- Indiana Bat: Listed as endangered by USFWS (found in Michigan only)

Current Federal Regulations

- Northern Long-eared Bat was designated as a threatened species under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) in 2015
 - Threatened status provides exemption: special regulation (“4(d) Rule”) that allows tree removal that might otherwise result in *take* (finalized 2016)
- The term *take* means to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap, capture, or collect, or to attempt to engage in any such conduct.
- Other bat species covered by the HCP could be listed as threatened or endangered if declines continue

HCP Reasoning

- If any covered bat species are listed as endangered, an ITP or consultation with USFWS would be required to continue activities that might result in a “take” of the species
- ITP application must include an HCP
- Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan working jointly on an HCP
- Proposed Permit Term – 50 years



Contents of the HCP & Where We Are

- Ch 1: Introduction
 - Ch 2: Covered Activities
 - Ch 3: Environmental Setting
 - **Ch 4: Impacts Analysis**
 - **Ch 5: Conservation Strategy**
 - **Appendix E: Attributes of High-Quality Bat Habitat in Managed Lake State Forests**
 - Ch 6: Implementation
 - Ch 7: Funding
 - Ch 8: Alternatives
- Initial comments received in 2018
- Ch. 4 & 5 now available for stakeholder input**
- Available soon (summer 2020)
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graph LR; C1[Ch 1: Introduction] --- G1; C2[Ch 2: Covered Activities] --- G1; C3[Ch 3: Environmental Setting] --- G1; G1 --- I1[Initial comments received in 2018]; C4[Ch 4: Impacts Analysis] --- G2; C5[Ch 5: Conservation Strategy] --- G2; A5[Appendix E: Attributes of High-Quality Bat Habitat in Managed Lake State Forests] --- G2; G2 --- I2[Ch. 4 & 5 now available for stakeholder input]; C6[Ch 6: Implementation] --- G3; C7[Ch 7: Funding] --- G3; C8[Ch 8: Alternatives] --- G3; G3 --- I3[Available soon (summer 2020)];
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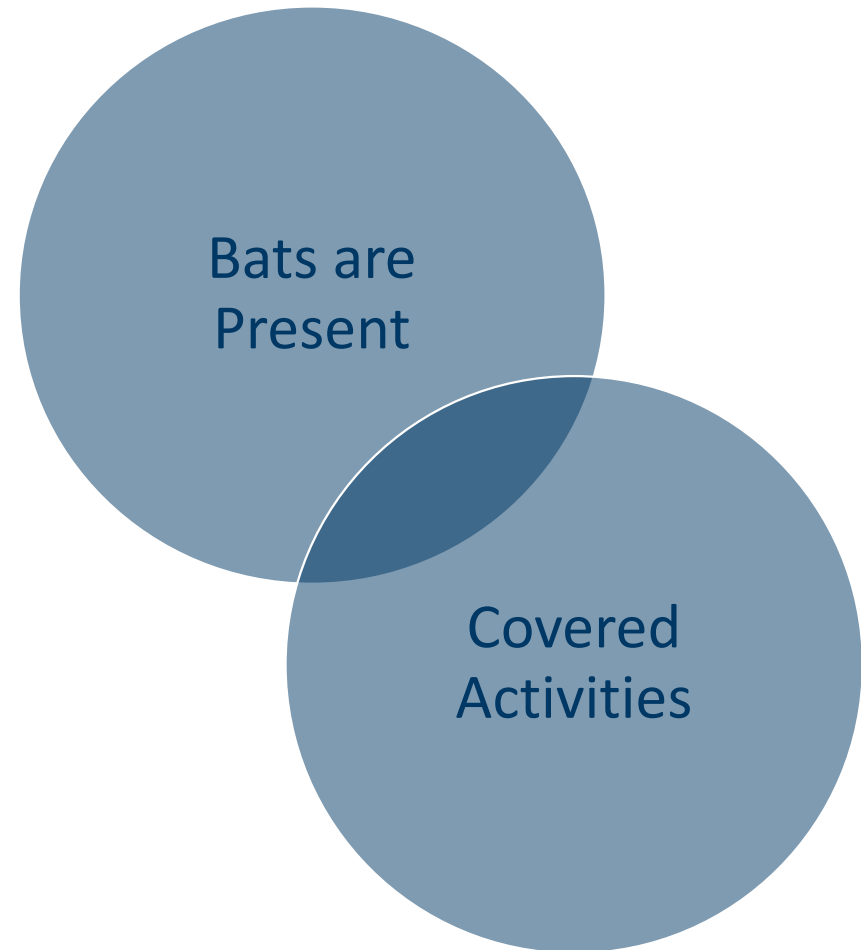
# Relationship Between HCP Ch. 4 & 5

- Ch. 4 analysis shows covered activities result in take (~3 bats/year)
- Ch. 5 demonstrates that this take is offset by the conservation objectives of the HCP
- Appendix E describes habitat features that constitute high quality habitat for covered bats



# HCP Chapter 4: Impacts Analysis

- Analyzed where both bats and covered activities occur
- Direct effects of covered activities on bats is ~3 bats per year over 50 years in Minnesota
- Indirect effects of covered activities are neutral or beneficial



# HCP Chapter 5: Conservation Strategy Overview

- Conservation strategy is organized by:
  - Biological Goals – guiding principles
  - Biological Objectives – how goals will be accomplished; what DNRs are promising to do and report on annually
  - Conservation Measures – potential actions that can be taken to achieve the Biological Objectives
- Take is offset by the conservation strategy

# HCP Chapter 5: Conservation Strategy

## ➤ **Biological Goal #1: Maintain Healthy Forests**

- Objective 1.1: Continue to manage DNR forests sustainably

## ➤ **Biological Goal #2: Protect Roosts and Foraging Habitat**

- Objective 2.1: Continue to implement Minnesota Forest Resources Council's Voluntary Site Level Forest Management [Guidelines](#)
- Objective 2.2: Protect all known maternity roost trees with 150-ft. buffer year-round

## ➤ **Biological Goal #3: Promote stewardship on other lands**

- Objective 3.1: Implement Landowner Enrollment Program
- Objective 3.2: Implement Bat Conservation Outreach Program

# HCP Chapter 5: Conservation Strategy (continued)

## ➤ **Biological Goal #4: Protect Hibernacula**

- Objective 4.1: Remove obstructions from hibernacula entrances
- Objective 4.2: Protect all known hibernacula entrances with 0.25 mile buffer year-round
- Objective 4.3: Maintain gates at hibernacula entrances
- Objective 4.4: Develop and collaborate on White-nose Syndrome Response Plan

## ➤ **Biological Goal #5: Avoid/Minimize Negative Effects of Covered Activities**

- Objective 5.1: Incorporate bat concerns into prescribed burn plans
- Objective 5.2: Restrict tree removal associated with road and trail construction and maintenance when bats are present (seasonally)

## **Ch. 4 & 5 Stakeholder Review:**

- March 16 – April 30: 45 day stakeholder review period
- Chapters available at: [Minnesota DNR Bat HCP Project Webpage](#)
- Submit comments to: [bathcp.dnr@state.mn.us](mailto:bathcp.dnr@state.mn.us)

## **Moving forward:**

- Ch. 6–8 will be made available for stakeholder review in ~Summer 2020
- Once all chapters of the HCP are compiled, the HCP will go through the NEPA process. The compiled HCP will be made available through the Federal Register for public comment.



# Thank You!

Submit comments to: [bathcp.dnr@state.mn.us](mailto:bathcp.dnr@state.mn.us)

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