Alberta Chapter of

The Wildlife Society

To Whom It May Concern

An Important Alert from the Alberta Chapter of The Wildlife Society (ACTWS)

White-nose Syndrome (WNS), a new fungal disease, is sweeping through bat populations in the northeast United States and spreading rapidly. It was recently identified in bats in Ontario sites, and probably occurs in Quebec. The effects are devastating and local, regional, and perhaps continental populations of a wide range of hibernating bat species are at risk of disappearing.

It is well documented that insectivorous bats cumulatively play significant roles in natural ecosystems. Their demise will ripple through many landscapes, with adverse effects on a wide range of environmental, agricultural, forestry, and recreational parameters.

ACTWS, a non-profit organization comprised of Alberta professionals and students in the field of wildlife biology and management, supports any and all efforts to try to curb the spread of WNS.

While spread of the fungus occurs by direct transfer from bat to bat, there are indications that inadvertent human transfer on clothing and equipment used in caving and research activities also can transfer the fungal spores to new sites. Our only defence at the moment is to try to minimize the potential for human transfer. Various guidelines and precautions are available to foster safe use of caves and mines while minimizing the risk of fungal spread.

Public education is the most valuable tool for wildlife managers to raise the profile of the disease, the risks, and the precautions recommended for minimizing human transfer. We encourage caving associations and practitioners across Canada to help get the word out. Wildlife agencies, in conjunction with regional bat organizations, have information products that can be easily loaded onto or linked to your web sites.

We hope your organization/ web master will seriously consider distributing information about WNS so we reach a wider audience and thereby enjoin the battle to conserve and maintain healthy bat populations.