



ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION

"Defending Wild Alberta through Awareness and Action"

June 7, 2013

Hon. Peter Kent
Minister of the Environment
Les Terrasses de la Chaudière
10 Wellington Street, 28th Floor
Gatineau, Quebec K1A 0H3

Via e-mail: Minister@ec.gc.ca

Re: Urgent Need to List Three Bat Species as Endangered

Dear Minister Kent:

Alberta Wilderness Association (AWA) requests that you assist Canadian hibernating bats' survival prospects by listing three bat species as endangered. The extra research, habitat protection, public awareness and support from an 'endangered' listing would be significant in slowing what is now the most rapid declines of any wild Canadian mammals in recorded history.

Alberta Wilderness Association is the oldest wilderness conservation group in Alberta dedicated to the completion of a protected areas network and the conservation of wilderness throughout the province. With over 4000 members in Alberta, we foster awareness of, and help Albertans protect, wild areas and wildlife.

In February 2012, the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) recommended that you issue an emergency order to list three bat species as endangered: the Little Brown Myotis, Northern Myotis and Tri-colored Bat. There is strong evidence of the imminent danger to these three species' survival from rapidly spreading 'white-nose syndrome' (WNS). As you know, due to an invasive fungus of European origin for which North American bats have little to no immunity, there have been dramatic bat population declines from WNS in hibernating bats in eastern and central Canada. In three monitored Ontario sites, population declines ranged from 82-99% in just a few years.

Leading Canadian bat scientists, in their letter to you of September 2012, urged you to issue an emergency order to list these species as endangered; they warned that there is the potential for an ecological disaster that would completely change ecosystems, in a manner similar to the virtual elimination of Atlantic cod. Bats are long-lived and reproduce slowly, so populations cannot easily be replaced. The disappearance of common hibernating bat species could have marked effects on insect populations, affecting agriculture and forestry.

Although WNS has not yet entered Alberta, AWA is concerned that the epidemic is now at Lake Superior and spreading westwards through bat populations at 200-400 km/year. It may spread to over a million Alberta bats in just a few years.

We recognize that there is a National Plan to Manage White Nose Syndrome in Canada. We are also aware that in April 2013, Environment Canada committed funds for a WNS research coordinator. We appreciate these steps forward, but much remains to be done in terms of habitat protection, public awareness and increasing research efforts.

'Endangered' listing will enable more research that is crucial to find ways to control white-nose syndrome. The listing and habitat identification process would significantly increase summer and winter habitat protection to raise the bats' survival chances. 'Endangered' listing will also increase Canadians' awareness of the important ecological role of bats, and encourage Canadians to protect bat habitat.

Minister Kent, we urge you to use the emergency listing powers provided to you and the Government of Canada to promote the swift actions essential to reduce WNS' massive mortality rates to hibernating bats and its rapid spread across Canada.

We look forward to your reply at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,
ALBERTA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carolyn Campbell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Carolyn Campbell, Conservation Specialist