



The newly released federal budget for 2012 contains good news for bats. Congress is directing the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to spend \$4 million for the fight against White-nose Syndrome, the rapidly spreading disease that has killed millions of bats across eastern North America since 2006. The direction was included in the Interior Appropriations segment of the Consolidated Appropriations Act that Congress passed and sent to President Obama for his signature.

The last time Congress designated funds for WNS was in 2010, when it appropriated \$1.9 million to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This year, Bat Conservation International and others in the bat-conservation community had requested \$11.1 million for six federal agencies that respond to WNS.

The bill directs the U.S. Forest Service and the U.S. Bureau of Land Management to prioritize research related to WNS, as well as surveying and monitoring bat populations on federal lands. If signed by the president, this will be the first funding legislation to contain WNS language for those two federal agencies. Including the BLM, with land holdings almost exclusively in the West, suggests that Congress appreciates the imminent threat that WNS poses to the western United States.

"We are very gratified that Congress is designating these critically needed funds to combat this horrendous disease," said Nina Fascione, Executive Director of BCI. "Our lawmakers clearly recognize the great economic and environmental benefits of bats. Their appetite for crop-destroying insects saves American farmers billions of dollars each year.

"BCI's dedicated members and friends deserve much of the credit for this through their enthusiastic response to our 'Write to Congress' campaigns," she said. "I can't thank them enough for that support. BCI members are the best."

She also praised bats' congressional allies, especially Senator Patrick Leahy of Vermont, whose work on behalf of WNS in the Appropriations Committee was critical to this development.

But, Fascione added, "the hard truth is that this money is not enough to stop or slow White-nose Syndrome. We must all redouble our efforts to keep Congress convinced of its importance and, in these difficult economic times, to find additional sources of funding through donors and foundations."

WNS has hammered bats of six species in 17 U.S. states and four Canadian provinces. The fungus that causes the disease has been confirmed in two additional states and three more species. As many as 25 bat species may be at risk, and biologists fear the disease is about to invade the American West.

The legislation directs the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, in coordination with other federal partners, to use the \$4 million on basic and applied research to stop the spread of the disease; support for states to implement response activities; and increase the agency's WNS surveillance, monitoring and coordination activities.

BCI also wishes than thank Senators Leahy and Frank Lautenberg of New Jersey and Representative Peter Welch of Vermont for circulating "Dear Colleague" letters urging members of the Appropriations Committees to support WNS funding for fiscal year 2012. The letters were signed by 11 senators and 13 representatives.

You can help BCI fight White-nose Syndrome and other critical threats to bats. Please visit [www.batcon.org/donate](http://www.batcon.org/donate).

**All articles in this issue:**

▶ [Funding to Fight WNS](#)

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