

Consensus Statement of
the Second WNS Emergency Science Strategy Meeting
Austin, Texas May 27-28, 2009

“White-Nose Syndrome (WNS) is a devastating disease of hibernating bats that has caused the most precipitous decline of North American wildlife in recorded history. Since it was first discovered in 2006, WNS has infected six species of insect-eating bats in the northeastern and southern U.S., causing declines approaching 100% in some populations; estimated losses have exceeded one million bats over the past three years. If the spread of WNS is not slowed or halted, further losses could lead to the extinction of entire species and could more than quadruple those that are federally listed as endangered in the U.S. Such losses alone are expected to have unprecedented consequences on ecosystem health throughout North America, with unknown economic consequences. Most bat species in North America feed on night-flying insects, of which many are pests of forests, agriculture, and garden crops or pose risks to human health. The number of insects consumed annually by one million bats is staggering—equivalent to 694 tons—emphasizing the extraordinary value of these bats to the normal function of both terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. Establishment of a national comprehensive research program is urgently needed to identify underlying mechanisms causing WNS and to develop sound management solutions.”