**National Plan for Assisting States, Federal Agencies, and Tribes in Managing White-Nose Syndrome in Bats**

**Questions and Answers**

1. **What was the problem that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service addressed with the National Plan for Assisting States, Federal Agencies, and Tribes in Managing White-Nose Syndrome in Bats?**

When the National Plan was developed, white-nose syndrome had caused the death of more than 1 million bats in eastern North America since it was first identified in 2007. It had been confirmed in 12 states and two Canadian provinces, and it continued to spread. The mobility of bats, the rapid spread of the disease, the potential for humans to help spread it and the severity of the disease’s consequences called for a swift national effort to avoid irreversible losses to bat populations.

The national plan ensured coordination among many agencies, organizations, institutions, and individuals involved in the white-nose syndrome investigation and response.

1. **What was the purpose of the national plan?**

As white-nose syndrome spread, challenges facing wildlife managers in understanding threats to bat populations and managing the disease continued to increase. Collaboration among state, federal and tribal wildlife management agencies and organizations was deemed essential to the survival of bats across North America.

The national plan provided a framework for coordinating and managing the national investigation and response to white-nose syndrome. It outlined actions for state, federal, and tribal coordination, and provided an overall strategy for investigating the cause of disease and finding ways to manage it.

1. **What agencies wrote the national plan?**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service led a team of federal, state, and tribal agencies including:

* U.S. Department of Agriculture
  + Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
  + Forest Service
* U.S. Department of Defense
  + Army Corps of Engineers
* U.S. Department of the Interior
  + Bureau of Land Management
  + Fish and Wildlife Service
  + Geological Survey
  + National Park Service
* Tribes
  + St. Regis Mohawk Tribe, Environment Division
* States
  + Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources
  + Missouri Department of Conservation
  + New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
  + Pennsylvania Game Commission
  + Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife
  + Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries

1. **What were the critical elements of the white-nose syndrome investigation and response?**

The original national plan detailed seven elements critical to investigating and managing white-nose syndrome:

* Communications and Outreach
* Data and Technical Information Management
* Diagnostics
* Disease Management
* Etiology and Epidemiological Research
* Disease Surveillance
* Conservation and Recovery

1. **How is the national plan carried out?**

The national plan provided guidance to agencies as they make decisions related to managing their response to white-nose syndrome. It was followed by an adaptive implementation plan that identified specific actions, entities responsible for each action, and cost estimates. The implementation plan is a dynamic document that can be updated with new information.

1. **Why does the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service care about white-nose syndrome?**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is dedicated to the conservation, protection, and enhancement of fish, wildlife, and plants and their habitats. It is responsible for carrying out and enforcing some of our nation’s most important environmental laws, such as the Endangered Species Act. When the implementation plan was developed, four endangered species and subspecies of hibernating bats in the United States were already affected by white-nose syndrome.. More than half the bat species living in the United States rely on hibernation for winter survival and are potentially susceptible to white-nose syndrome..

1. **How can I find more information on white-nose syndrome?**

Visit the white-nose syndrome website: [http:/www.whitenosesyndrome.org](http://www.whitenosesyndrome.org).