

National Speleological Society
White Nose Syndrome Ad Hoc Liaison Committee
Current Strategies

A. Supporting WNS Research and Effective Management

1. Support priority WNS research through the NSS WNS Rapid Response Fund by urging members and the public to make donations, and efficiently administering a grant program through the NSS WNS Liaison;
2. Advocate for other sources of WNS funding, including through Congress;
3. Encourage NSS members and researchers to collaborate in WNS-related research projects;
4. Ask cavers to honor cave closure orders on public and private properties;
5. Support cave access and management policies that promote responsible cave access for both professional and recreational purposes, while providing resource protection that is reasonable and based only on the most current scientific information regarding WNS. These policies should address demonstrated WNS risks to cave life using the best available data, while recognizing the inherent differences in WNS risks between caves. These include the scope and frequency of bat use, environmental conditions such as periodic flooding, and the physical characteristics of the cave itself. They should also recognize the speculative nature of human transmission of WNS and difference in WNS risks among caving strategies. These latter include public show caves, regional or local caving, single system exploration or recreational use, and models that may either be seasonal or year-round in nature.
6. Publicize and ask cavers to follow the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service decontamination protocols;
7. Until and unless research proves this to be ineffective, stress to cavers the importance of clothing and equipment used in WNS-affected areas not being used in caves outside of those areas;
8. Work to ensure that WNS cave access and management recommendations, as well as decontamination protocols, are based on demonstrated risks and the best current data, are effective, and are reflective of safe and responsible caving practices.

B. Educating Cavers and the Public

1. Encourage NSS members and internal organizations to take the lead in providing advice to their local communities on best practices for protecting bats in caves and limiting the spread of WNS;
2. Encourage NSS members to make special efforts to seek out and maintain contact with cavers not associated with the NSS, to inform them about WNS and how they can help limit its effects;

3. Develop and distribute WNS educational outreach materials and information;
4. Maintain an NSS WNS Web page that is current and informative, striving to be the most complete source of WNS information.
5. Reach out to youth to educate them about WNS in the context of overall appreciation for caves and cave resources, providing an opportunity for the development of the next generation of conservation-minded cavers.

C. Protecting Cave Resources within the Context of WNS

1. Regularly evaluate access policies for caves on NSS Cave Nature Preserves, taking into consideration USFWS and state agency advisories and current information concerning the incidence and spread of WNS. Post closure information on the NSS Cave Preserve web pages;
2. Assist local cave conservancies and other land managers and cave owners in addressing the challenges of WNS in the context of other cave management issues, including vandalism and public education about cave conservation in general;
3. Recognize and maintain decades-long government/caver volunteer value relationships and private landowner relationships that have led to successful cave conservation efforts;
4. Support WNS research and resource management practices that respect the entire cave ecosystem. The NSS recognizes that bats are a very important, but single aspect of caves, which should not be played as trump over other aspects of the cave environment and ecology;
5. Support the interface between the public and knowledgeable cavers, to promote education about WNS, and the overall value of caves and their ecosystems.

D. Protecting the Strength, Influence, and Viability of the NSS and its Internal Organizations.

1. Continue to work with agencies and other organizations on WNS issues, promoting reasonable policies and effectively representing the NSS and its membership's interests;
2. Effectively represent the NSS and its membership when speaking with the media and public on WNS issues. Strive to be proactive in representing cavers in the press and public;
3. Fully participate in WNS symposia, meetings, and conferences;
4. Endeavor to enlist NSS members and internal organizations as partners in managing and solving WNS issues;
5. Publicize the value of the NSS in solving and managing WNS, representing the voice of cavers, and influencing federal and state policies. Stress the importance of members continuing to support the NSS and its goals.