



## **News for Immediate Release**

**Sept. 9, 2014**

### **Governor Corbett Announces Pennsylvania is Receiving Federal Dollars to Plan Forest Management, Conservation for Bats**

**Harrisburg** – Governor Tom Corbett today announced that Pennsylvania will receive an additional \$675,000 from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service through the federal Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund to support conservation planning for bats on 3.8 million acres of public lands in Pennsylvania.

“We’re taking a proactive approach to planning for the conservation of Indiana, long-eared and other bats across the state lands system through this process to avoid impacts to the greatest extent possible, and mitigate them where they might occur,” Governor Corbett said.

Combined with a 2012 grant, Pennsylvania has received a total of \$1.2 million for the development of a Habitat Conservation Plan (HCP) to address impacts to federally-listed bats in Pennsylvania from forest management practices on state park, forest and game lands.

The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the Game Commission manage a combined 3.8 million acres of mostly forested public lands for many uses and values, including wildlife habitat.

The original grant of \$600,000 allowed for the development of the HCP itself. The additional \$675,000 will enable the agencies to complete all public outreach functions required of the HCP process such as an Environmental Impact Statement and all public meetings. The agencies anticipate drafts will be available in summer 2015.

“One of the benefits of this plan is that it allows our agencies to limit and address impacts across the entire 3.8 million acres over a 30-year period, rather than on a project-by-project basis,” DCNR Secretary Ellen Ferretti said. “That allows us to be more proactive in planning for the conservation of bats across the system of state lands.”

The plan will cover forest management activities such as removing trees for regeneration, harvesting damaged trees, maintaining trails and roads and conducting prescribed fires, and it will outline how to effectively minimize and mitigate impacts on protected bats.

Initiatives such as seasonal restrictions, canopy retention and hibernation protection will be incorporated into the plan to aid in the conservation of Indiana and other bats.

Both agencies are waiting for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife's final determination of the northern long-eared bat's listing status in April 2015 to determine the level of inclusion in the HCP.

Pennsylvania's grant was part of nearly \$35 million in grants announced today to 20 states to enable collaborative efforts to conserve many of America's imperiled species.

"We are pleased to work with and support the efforts of the Pennsylvania Game Commission and Department of Conservation and Natural Resources to conserve bats that have been devastated by the disease white-nose syndrome," said Lora Zimmerman, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Pennsylvania supervisor.

For more information about the Pennsylvania Habitat Conservation Plan visit [http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/cs/groups/public/documents/document/dcnr\\_20028770.pdf](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/cs/groups/public/documents/document/dcnr_20028770.pdf).

**Media contact:**

Valerie Caras, Governor's Office; 717-783-1116  
Christina Novak, DCNR; 717-772-9101

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