Order # R6-2016- 04

FOREST ORDER

USDA FOREST SERVICE
RIO GRANDE NATIONAL FOREST

Prohibitions and Restrictions on Cave Access

Pursuant to 16 United States Code (U.S.C.) § 551 and 36 Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) 261.50(a), the following acts are prohibited on all National Forest System lands administered by the XX National Forest in the State of XX.

The purpose of this Order is to reduce the likelihood of the inadvertent spread of the fungus that causes White-nose syndrome and to protect bat species from White-nose Syndrome.

These Prohibitions are in addition to the general prohibitions set forth in 36 CFR Part 261 Subpart A.

PROHIBITIONS:

Entering any cave on National Forest System lands, subject to the exceptions set forth below. 36 C.F.R. 261.53 (a), (b) and (d).

EXCEPTIONS:

Pursuant to 36 C.F.R. § 261.50 (e), the following persons are exempt from the Prohibition set forth above:

1. Any Federal, State or local law enforcement officer, or member of an organized rescue or firefighting force working in the performance of an official duty.
2. Except for the caves identified in Exhibit A during the dates specified in Exhibit A, persons who:

   a. are in possession of a valid, signed registration form obtained through the Rocky Mountain Region's public website (http://www.fs.usda.gov/r2/) or by a written request to the Rocky Mountain Region (USDA Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Region, 740 Simms St., Golden, CO 80401; ATTN: cave registration request; and

   b. have decontaminated their equipment and clothing prior to entering the cave in accordance with those guidelines hereby attached and incorporated into this Order as Exhibit B; and

   c. are not in possession of any clothing or equipment that has been used in caves or mines in White-nose Syndrome affected States and Canadian Provinces in any cave on National Forest System lands. The list of White-nose Syndrome affected States and Canadian Provinces can be found at (http://www.whitenosesyndrome.org) and is indicated on the authorized Registration Form.
3. Forest Service employees, contractors to the Forest Service, and personnel from State wildlife agencies when conducting White nose Syndrome related activities who have decontaminated their equipment and clothing prior to entering the cave in accordance with those guidelines hereby attached and incorporated into this Order as Exhibit B and who are not in possession of

any clothing or equipment that has been used in caves or mines in White-nose Syndrome affected States and Canadian Provinces in any cave on National Forest System lands.

4. Tribal members of any Indian Tribe defined under 36 C.F.R. § 261.2 who are conducting ceremonies, rituals, or other culturally important events are exempt from this Order.

5. Persons with a valid Special Use Permit specifically exempting them from the effect of this Order.

6. Persons in possession of written authorization from a Forest Supervisor specifically authorizing cave entry to conduct research, inventory, or monitoring as needed to understand and manage White-nose Syndrome and to contribute to the nomination of cave resources as significant under the Federal Cave Resources Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 4301 – 4309 and 36 C.F.R.290) who have decontaminated their equipment and clothing prior to entering the cave in accordance with those guidelines hereby attached and incorporated into this Order as Exhibit B and who are not in possession of any clothing or equipment that has been used in caves or mines in White-nose Syndrome affected States and Canadian Provinces in any cave on National Forest System lands.

7. Members of the National Speleological Society or Cave Research Foundation conducting activities consistent with the national Memorandums of Understanding between the Forest Service and these caving organizations (#16-SU-11132428-117 and 16-SU-11132428-118, respectively) with a written authorization from a Forest Supervisor specifically authorizing cave entry who have decontaminated their equipment and clothing prior to entering the cave in accordance with those guidelines hereby attached and incorporated into this Order as Exhibit B and who are not in possession of any clothing or equipment that has been used in caves or mines in White-nose Syndrome affected States and Canadian Provinces in any cave on National Forest System lands. These Members must have proof of their Current Membership and the written authorization from the authorized Forest Supervisor must be in the physical possession of the Member or Members when undertaking the exempted activities. Related activities involve for example leading or assisting cave research, survey and monitoring, identification of sensitive resources, installation of bat gates and signs, monitoring cave use and impacts, survey and cartographic work, cave cleanup and restoration activities, bat observations, monitoring cave and karst resource or environmental conditions, white-nose syndrome surveillance, or related activities or information-gathering of mutual interest and benefit to inform management and conservation of the cave and karst resources.

This order will be in effect from August 1, 2016 – July 31, 2019, or until this Order is terminated whichever occurs first.

Violation of these prohibitions set forth above is punishable by a fine of not more than $5,000 for an individual and $10,000 for an organization, or imprisonment for not more than six (6) months, or both. (16 U.S.C. § 551, 18 U.S.C. §§ 3559 and 3571).

Dated this 11th day of August, 2016, at Monte Vista, Colorado.

for Tom Malecek

DAN S. DALLAS
Forest Supervisor
Rio Grande National Forest, USDA Forest Service

EXHIBIT A

AREAS SUBJECT TO CLOSURE

Entry to the following caves is prohibited during the dates specified:

Cave Name	Cave Number	Ranger District	State	Closure Dates (inclusive)

EXHIBIT B

Decontamination Procedures for Rio Grande National Forest To Help Prevent the Spread of White-Nose Syndrome (WNS) Associated with Cave (and Abandoned Mine) Entry

USDA Forest Service
Rio Grande National Forest
July 29, 2016

All approved cave entries under this order for the **Rio Grande National Forest** must adhere to the latest National White-Nose Syndrome Decontamination Protocol. As of this order the current protocol is Version 04.12.2016. The protocol is periodically updated, and all persons entering caves in the **Rio Grande National Forest** are responsible for ensuring they are following the latest version available at www.whitenosesyndrome.org. Additionally, the **Rio Grande National Forest** provides the following addenda that clarifies or expands on the national protocol relative to decontamination procedures for National Forest System lands in the Region.

Rio Grande National Forest Addenda to the National Protocol

Decontamination on National Forest System lands

White-nose syndrome (WNS) decontamination will occur using the national decontamination protocol in relation to sanctioned cave entry. A cave is defined under the Federal Cave Resources Protection Act as "any naturally occurring void, cavity, recess, or system interconnected passages beneath the surface of the earth or within a cliff or ledge that is large enough for a person to enter, whether the entrance is excavated or naturally formed." Caves used by bats and of concern in this document include all caves and fissures whether they are accessible by humans or are known to be used by bats or not.

While the national decontamination protocol properly emphasizes that "the label is the law" when using the products identified in the protocol appropriate for decontamination, many of these are household products for which the labels may not be fully instructive about their use in the situations and environments associated with White-nose syndrome-related decontamination. Consequently, added precaution may be needed in use and proper disposal of decontamination products and materials. Consistent with the national protocol, we also emphasize again bagging exposed gear and clothing and carrying it off-site (off of National Forest System lands) in order to complete the decontamination, following the initial removal of sediment and other debris immediately after emerging from the cave.

USFS employees are responsible at all times to meet any other existing agency or Region 2 requirements for cave entry and/or use of pesticides in addition to any requirements in this Exhibit.

Disinfectants/Applications

While the national protocol provides several product and procedural options for decontamination, the preferred option for decontamination for cave and mine entries in the Rocky Mountain Region is to submerge gear in hot water at sustained temperatures ≥55°C (131°F) for **at least 20 minutes** whenever possible without harming the treated gear or equipment. (Water at the required temperature should be very hot, but not boiling, in most cases. Temperature at boiling is altitude-dependent). Thermometers must be used to ensure proper temperatures over the duration of the decontamination. All appropriate regulations regarding use of stoves or fire, as well as appropriate safety precautions to prevent burns or risk of wildfire must be followed.

Application of quaternary ammonium if used is limited to hard non-porous surfaces. Other decontaminated surfaces or materials need to be treated with a 131°F water bath for **at least 20 minutes** or 10% bleach solution within the limits specified by the label and Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS).

Disinfectants known to be effective on *Pseudogymnoascus destructans* (*Pd*), the fungus that causes WNS, contain chemicals registered with the EPA. It is a violation of federal law to use, store, or dispose of a regulated product in any manner not prescribed on the approved product label and associated MSDS. Users must obtain product labels and MSDSs, read them carefully, and use products only as instructed on the label. Final determination of suitability for any decontaminant is the sole responsibility of the user. Treatments which include the use of the products listed below need to be applied carefully, especially in confined spaces, due to risk of inhalation or contact with the product. All users should be aware of these risks prior to implementing the protocol and understand that products and corresponding procedures may cause irreversible harm. Always use personal protective equipment to reduce contact with these products, particularly when recommended by the manufacturer.

Safe Use of Decontaminants

Because each state can have different regulations concerning the disposal of decontamination solutions and rinse water, always dispose of these where they will be processed in a municipal water treatment facility. ***Never dispose of solutions or rinse water on the ground, in ground water, in outhouses, or down simple waste water systems such as at campgrounds or rural RV dumps.*** Disposal on National Forest System lands is prohibited.

Biosecurity/Decontamination Procedures

Caves

Clothing (including outer clothing), boots, socks, harness/ropes, helmet, hardhat, hippack/daypack, headlamp, flashlight, camera, and other gear should not be used in multiple entries in the same day unless the cleaning and decontamination recommended below can be performed between each entry. Exceptions include:

- Where caves are known to be interconnected and have multiple entrances, decontamination is not required between entries at the various entrances within the same day.
- Forests may identify logical decontamination zones that allow decontamination between cave clusters when use or disposal of decontamination chemicals between individual caves, present a human or environmental risk. Decontamination zones should also encompass areas that are likely to be used by the same group of bats and at the smallest possible geographic unit to minimize risk of contamination between zones. These geographic units could be hydrologic unit code boundaries (HUCs) or bat habitat use areas.

- Movement between the sites will occur by foot. If any vehicle will be used to travel between sites, gear will be decontaminated or securely stored in a container before entering/mounting the vehicle (including automobile, ATV, mountain bike, horse, etc.).

- Any item that comes in contact with contaminated gear (anything that has entered a site) will need decontamination. For example, if a backpack is put on while still wearing the coveralls/tyvex suit worn in the site, the backpack will need to be decontaminated.

- Any item that will not be securely stored in a container should be decontaminated before placed in a vehicle. This includes outer clothing that has entered a site (i.e. do not get in or on a vehicle in clothing that has entered a site unless it is decontaminated). Vehicle interiors are impractical to decontaminate so should be kept clean.

- If a site being entered is outside the designated decontamination zone/HIC, that gear/clothing should be decontaminated or changed for clean gear/clothing. Decontamination must occur no less frequently than at the end of each day.

- Gear that is designated to a site or decontamination zone should be decontaminated or replaced annually.