ORDER OF THE REGIONAL FORESTER CLOSING AN AREA TO ENTRY, TO WIT:

Emergency Closure

All Caves and Abandoned Mines on National Forest System Lands in the Rocky Mountain Region

Pursuant to 16 U.S.C. § 551 and 36 C.F.R. 261.50(a), the following acts and omissions are prohibited on all National Forest System lands, administered by the Rocky Mountain Region in the states of Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota and Wyoming.

1. Entering any cave or abandoned mine, regardless of distance or depth, except those areas listed in Exhibit A. 36 C.F.R. § 261.53 (a), (b) and (d).
2. Going into any cave or abandoned mine on National Forest System lands listed in Exhibit A or pursuant to the exemptions listed below, without decontamination prior to entry to, and departure from, said cave or abandoned mine consistent with those guidelines hereby attached and incorporated into this Order as Exhibit B.

For purposes of this Order "abandoned mines" are defined as those inactive mine openings and adits that are not situated on an unpatented claim under the 1872 Mining Law, and which are situated on National Forest System lands.

These restrictions are necessary to protect bat species from White-nose Syndrome. They are in addition to the general prohibitions set forth in 36 CFR Part 261. This emergency closure will be effective for one year, from July 26, 2011 through July 25, 2012, unless terminated earlier by the Regional Forester.

Pursuant to 36 C.F.R. § 261.50 (e), the following persons are exempt from this order while still subject to the procedures under Exhibit B:

1. Persons entering those caves listed in Exhibit A, which is attached and hereby incorporated into this Order.
2. 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.
3. Persons operating under the 1872 Mining Law are exempt from Prohibition 1.
4. Forest Service employees, contractors of the Forest Service, and persons with a written authorization from a Forest Service Officer 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 Resource Protection Act (16 U.S.C. 4301 – 4309 and 36 C.F.R.290), provided said activities are consistent with Exhibit B.

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 26th day of July 2011, at Golden, Colorado.

Jerome Thomas 7/26/2011

Jerome Thomas
Regional Forester (Acting)
Rocky Mountain Region, USDA Forest Service

EXHIBIT A

LIST OF AREAS NOT SUBJECT TO EMERGENCY CLOSURE

The following area is exempt from the prohibition on entry but is subject to the decontamination procedures as shown in Exhibit B.

1. Wonderland Cave, Black Hills National Forest
   Legal description: Section 27 of Township 4 North, Range 5 East, Meade County, South Dakota

EXHIBIT B

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

USDA Forest Service
Rocky Mountain Region
July 2010

White-Nose Syndrome (WNS) has been documented across the eastern United States and Canada and most recently in Missouri and Oklahoma. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recommends that recreational caving should not occur in WNS affected and adjacent areas in order to reduce the risk of human transmission of the fungus *Geomyces destructans* into new areas until WNS is better understood.

The Rocky Mountain Region is restricting access to caves and abandoned mines under its jurisdiction. A "cave" includes all caves and fissures whether they are known to be used by bats or not. A cave is defined under the Federal Cave Resource 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." "Abandoned mines" include inactive open adits, tunnels, and shafts, but do not include active mines where ongoing mining activities are being conducted. If entry into these caves and/or abandoned mines is necessary, take the following precautions to prevent the possible spread of the fungus *Geomyces destructans*.

You should not handle bats unless specifically authorized to do so. However, if you should observe live or dead bats that may be exhibiting characteristic signs of WNS, report this immediately to the nearest Forest Service office (http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/contact/), state wildlife agency (http://www.fws.gov/offices/statelinks.html), or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Ecological Services Field Office (http://www.fws.gov/offices/). Visit http://www.fws.gov/whitenosesyndrome.html for the most current information about the spread of this disease.

General Guidelines to Prevent the Spread of WNS

- Avoid entry into all caves and abandoned mines, and observe closures and advisories.
- **Do not use gear that was used in a WNS-affected state outside that affected state.**
- **Decontaminate previously used gear** immediately, store gear away, and thoroughly wash and decontaminate any surfaces with which these items may have come into contact (e.g., car trunk, duffle bag, etc.).

Caves. Avoid cave entry if possible. Clothing (including outerwear), boots, socks, harness/ropes, helmet, hardhat, fannypack/daypack, headlamp, flashlight, camera, and other gear should not be used in multiple entries in the same day unless the cleaning and decontamination described below can be performed between each entry. In situations where caves are known to be interconnected and have multiple entrances, decontamination is not required between entry at the various entrances, within the same day.

Abandoned Mines. For the purposes of this discussion a "site" may consist of one or more related underground mine openings and may be as large as several square miles. Under situations where surveys

are being conducted in association with abandoned mine closures for human safety, and multiple sites are being visited in a single day in states currently undocumented as affected by WNS, containment and decontamination between each site may be impractical. Specifically for abandoned mine entry associated with human-safety closures we recommend the following:

- Avoid entry if possible. Limit entry to that necessary to safely perform required work. For construction this is typically less than 50 feet inside the adit or shaft.
- Follow the decontamination and containment protocol between sites if feasible. If decontamination is not feasible between sites, identify feasible opportunities for decontamination at the smallest possible geographic unit to minimize risk of contamination between locations. These geographic units could be hydrologic unit code boundaries (HUCs) or bat habitat use areas.
- Decontamination must occur no less frequently than at the end of each day.
- Protect the interior of vehicles with tarps, sheets, etc. if driving between sites without decontaminating clothing and gear.

Containment and Decontamination Procedures for Abandoned Mines and Caves:

- Entry will only occur with clothing (including outer clothing), boots, socks, harness/ropes, helmet, hardhat, fannypack/daypack, headlamp, flashlight, camera and other gear that have been **fully cleaned following the protocol below and rinsed prior to entry** to remove residue of chemical product used.
- **Minimize gear** taken in to a site.
- If possible, do not bring electronic equipment underground. If practical, **cameras** and other similar equipment that must be used may be placed in plastic casing (i.e. underwater camera housing) or wrapped in plastic wrap where only the lens is left unwrapped to allow for photos to be taken. The plastic wrap or the equipment can then be decontaminated after use.
- **Air monitors** are required safety equipment for underground abandoned mine entry. The manufacturer of your air monitor (ESPECIALLY THE SENSORS) must be consulted with prior to applying any decontaminant chemicals, to ensure that the sensors and electronic components are not compromised in any way. Follow the manufacturer's recommended procedures.
- **Tyvek® or other disposable outerwear, rubber boot covers, and latex rubber gloves** may be used for each entry in lieu of decontamination procedures for clothing.
- **Companion animals** should be kept out of caves and mines as fungal spores could adhere to fur and be transferred to another cave.

Step #1 upon exiting a cave or abandoned mine:

- Thoroughly scrape or brush off any dirt and mud from clothing, boots, and gear and then place them in a sealed plastic bag or plastic container with lid to be cleaned and disinfected off site.
- Outer clothing should be removed prior to entering a vehicle and after/between a site visit. A clean change of clothing is recommended.
- Surface cleaning of exposed skin with antibacterial hand sanitizer should be done prior to entering the vehicle's cab.
- Place disposable items (e.g., Tyvek® outerwear, rubber boot covers, latex gloves) in sealable containers, to be appropriately decontaminated and disposed of off-site.

Step #2 after exiting a cave or abandoned mine:

- **For clothing and submersible (i.e., soft-sided) gear:** Wash all clothing and any appropriate equipment in washing machine or by hand using conventional detergents. Washing can be done in cold, warm or hot water. Laboratory testing has found Woolite® fabric wash to be the best detergent for this procedure. Rinse thoroughly, and then follow by soaking for a minimum of 10 minutes in one of the recommended decontaminating products listed below, then rinse and air dry. Boiling items for 15 minutes can be done in lieu of chemical treatment.

- **For non-submersible gear** (i.e., equipment that will be damaged by submersion): Clean thoroughly with soap and water (or use Lysol® Disinfecting Wipes), then decontaminate by applying one of the recommended chemical products listed below to the outside surface for a minimum of 10 minutes, then rinse and air dry. This may include flashlights, headlamps (elastic straps can be removed and washed as a submersible item), and helmets.
- **Footwear:** Where possible, rubber (wellington-type) boots (which withstand harsh decontaminating products and are easily cleaned) are recommended. Boots need to be fully scrubbed and rinsed so that all soil and organic material are removed. The entire rubber and leather boots, including soles and leather uppers, can then be decontaminated with an appropriate chemical product listed below for a minimum of 10 minutes, then rinse and air dry. Boiling items for 15 minutes can be done in lieu of chemical treatment.
- **Ropes and Harnesses:** It is the responsibility of each individual relying on life-support equipment, such as harnesses and ropes, to ensure that the decontamination protocols in use are chemically compatible with this equipment. In cases where safety following decontamination has not yet been evaluated, then ropes and webbing should be dedicated to one cave or not used at all to prevent the spread of WNS. **To date, only Sterling rope and webbing have been shown not to be damaged by the following decontamination protocol:** Wash rope/webbing in a front loading washing machine on the gentle cycle using Woolite® Extra Delicates detergent. Treat by immersion in a 1:128 dilution of Lysol IC Quaternary Disinfectant Cleaner for 15 minutes. Rinse in fresh, clean water for a minimum of two rinses and allow to air dry. Other products have yet to be tested for integrity after decontamination.
- **Cameras and Electronic Equipment:** If practical, cameras and other similar equipment that must be used may be placed in plastic casing (i.e. underwater camera housing) or wrapped in plastic wrap where only the lens is left unwrapped to allow for photos to be taken. The plastic wrap can then be decontaminated by using Lysol® Disinfecting Wipes and discarded after use. If using plastic wrap is not practical, Lysol® Disinfecting Wipes can be applied directly on camera surfaces or plastic casing.
- **Vehicles:** Vehicles used to transport equipment may harbor spores. Always remove and contain clothing and gear away from your vehicle in sealed plastic bags and storage containers with lids and wipe them with wipes prior to placing them in your vehicle. Dispose or decontaminate bags and storage containers along with your gear using one of the chemical products listed below.
- Showering or bathing is required following cave or abandoned mine visits.

Recommended Decontamination Products. The following chemical products were tested in a laboratory setting and were found to be particularly effective against killing the more resistant, spore-form of *Geomyces destructans*, as well as the hyphae:

1. Lysol® IC Quaternary Disinfectant Cleaner (with a minimum of 0.3% quaternary ammonium compound) - this is a concentrate which requires a 1:128 dilution (1 part concentrate to 128 parts water or 1 ounce of concentrate per gallon of water)
2. Lysol® All-purpose Professional Cleaner
3. Formula 409® Antibacterial All-Purpose Cleaner (with a minimum of 0.3% quaternary ammonium compound)
4. A 10% solution of household bleach - this must be made by measuring 1 part bleach to 9 parts water (an estimate of 1:9 is insufficient)
5. Lysol® Disinfecting Wipes
6. Boiling water

Quaternary ammonium products such as 409 and Lysol cleaner must be properly disposed into a municipal water system (poured down a drain or toilet) or similar system to receive required treatment. It is illegal to dump these products on the ground. Follow the label instructions and do not

wipe these products directly on your skin or surfaces that come in contact with humans, pets, bats, or other wildlife.

If using bleach solution, do not store dilution for more than 24 hours as the bleach will begin to break down once it is diluted. Store in opaque bottles as bleach also breaks down when exposed to sunlight.

Product guidelines should be consulted for compatibility before using any decontamination product listed under Section 3 on specific equipment. **Also, detergents and quaternary ammonium compounds (i.e. Lysol® IC Quaternary Disinfectant Cleaner) should not be mixed directly with bleach as this will inactivate the bleach and in some cases produce a toxic chlorine gas**.

Show caves and tourist mines. Provide education to visitors on caves, bats, and WNS such as is being conducted at Mammoth Cave (http://www.nps.gov/maca/whitenose.htm).
Work with contractors, special use permittees, and concessionaires to enlist a decontamination process for all individuals entering show caves or tourist mines by implementing a combination of the following actions that best fits the situation and will be most effective:

- Closing these sites to entry for anything other than WNS surveillance during hibernation season (roughly from October 1 – May 1).
- Forbidding entry with footwear that has previously been in a cave or mine **OR** require footwear decontamination prior to entry at a provided/supervised decontamination station, **OR** sell disposable rubber booties to be worn in place of footwear.
- Forbid entry with clothing that has previously been in a cave or mine **OR** provide disposable Tyvek suits for sale.
- Forbid carrying accessory items such as water bottles, cameras, cell phones, daypacks in to caves or mines that have previously been in a cave or mine, unless decontaminated on site.
- Provide a decontamination station and personnel to run it.
- Restrict human entry in to portions of caves or mines used by bats any time of year.
- Restrict human traffic to well-defined contained pathways that avoid opportunities for human contact with cave features other than the pathway.

As new information becomes available, these decontamination procedures will be updated. The most current decontamination procedures will be made available at Forest Service offices and will be provided to persons obtaining a permit. A separate protocol will be provided to persons handling bats for research purposes.

USDA Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Region
Emergency Cave and Abandoned Mine Closure Order

Questions and Answers

What is White-Nose Syndrome?

White-Nose Syndrome (WNS) is a fungal disease that has killed more than one million bats across the northeast and mid-Atlantic United States during the past four years and continues unchecked. Bats with WNS may exhibit a white fungus that is found around the muzzle, ears, or wings of affected individuals. Other symptoms are displayed. For example, bats have been found moving to the entrance of the caves and often coming out of the caves and flying around in the middle of the day during winter months. Bats displaying this abnormal behavior have reduced fat reserves. Although it is normal for bats to occasionally interrupt their winter roosting, they are not equipped to withstand the drain on their fat reserves resulting from flying more often and during the day, a behavior thought to be caused by the irritation of the fungus. Many bats are non-responsive and many have been found dead both inside and outside caves.

What causes the bats to die?

Bats affected by WNS are basically starving to death, but scientists don't know what is triggering the starvation. Studies are under way to determine if the bats are going into hibernation underweight or if they lose their body fat at an accelerated rate during hibernation. If bats lose more body fat than normal during hibernation, they do not have the energy reserves to survive until spring. If they are going into hibernation underweight, scientists will explore the possible reasons for this.

Does WNS pose a risk to human health?

WNS is in caves and mines that have been visited by hundreds of people during the past three years, yet there have been no reported illnesses attributable to it. However, because scientists are still learning about WNS, we do not know if there is a risk to humans from contact with affected bats affected bats, and we cannot advise you about human health risk.

Why care about bats?

Bats are an important part of our natural system. There are over 1,000 species of bats worldwide and they make up about a quarter of all mammal species. Bat populations all over the world are declining for various reasons. In the Rocky Mountain Region, there are 21 bat species known to occur on NFS lands, of which 15 are cave-hibernating bats susceptible to WNS. Three of these species are currently on the Regional Forester's sensitive species list.

Bats are important plant pollinators and they help control nocturnal insects, some of which are agricultural pests. Almost any insect that is active at night can be food for a bat, including moths, beetles, flies, crickets, gnats, mayflies, wasps, and mosquitoes. An

individual bat can eat its body weight in insects every night. It is estimated that the one million bats killed by WNS to date would have eaten more than 5.5 tons of insects per night or 2.4 million pounds of insects per year. Bats are an important element in the ecology of caves. Many forms of cave life depend upon the nutrients brought in by bats and released from their guano (feces).

Bats have contributed much to human knowledge through scientific studies of their biology, echolocation abilities, and certain aspects of their physiology.

What bat species are susceptible to the disease?

Bats that hibernate in caves or mines where cool, moist conditions are favorable to the *Geomyces destructans* fungus are susceptible. To date, WNS has affected little brown, big brown, eastern small-footed, northern long-eared, tricolor (formerly eastern pipistrelle), and cave bats, as well as the endangered Indiana and gray bats. There are 15 species of hibernating bats that occur on NFS lands in the Rocky Mountain Region.

Where has WNS been detected?

WNS has been detected in fourteen states: New Hampshire, Vermont, New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, West Virginia, Virginia, Tennessee, Missouri, and Oklahoma, and in the Canadian provinces of Quebec and Ontario. *Geomyces destructans,* the fungus associated with WNS, has been detected on bats in several European countries including Spain, France, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Romania, and Hungary. European bats are not dying from WNS.

Why are you concerned about WNS spreading west?

The most recent discoveries in Missouri and Oklahoma represent the first confirmation of WNS west of the Mississippi River, and, for the Oklahoma case, in a species of bat—cave myotis—not previously known to be susceptible to WNS. The cave myotis is known to co-mingle in caves with a highly mobile bat species, the Brazilian free-tailed bat. These factors have heightened concern about the spread of WNS to the western United States, and to additional species and populations of bats across the continent.

Why are you prohibiting access to caves and abandoned mines?

Cave and abandoned mine access restrictions are being implemented to slow the spread of WNS and reduce disturbance to bats while researchers continue to look for solutions to the devastating effects of WNS on regional bat populations, and associated ecological and economic impacts. WNS has killed more than one million bats of 9 different species during the last four years. In 2009, this disease spread south from New England into West Virginia and Virginia, a jump of nearly 500 miles. During the winter of 2009 – 2010, WNS continued to spread to Maryland, Delaware, Tennessee, Missouri, Oklahoma, Ontario, and Quebec, as well as additional sites in previously affected states. Transmission of WNS within previously affected states is probably caused by bat-to-bat transmission. Long-distance dispersal of WNS is likely the result of a human vector. WNS is now found as far west as western Oklahoma—about three hundred miles from the Pike-San Isabel National Forest. Caves and abandoned mines are being closed as an

interim measure under an emergency order for the Rocky Mountain Region of the Forest Service (Colorado and parts of Wyoming, South Dakota, Kansas, and Nebraska) in an attempt to slow its spread west.

The fungus associated with WNS is new to science. The best available information shows that WNS is primarily transmitted through bat-to-bat interaction, but also can be transported inadvertently from site to site on footwear, clothing, and gear of cave visitors. Immediate suspension of caving activities is warranted until more information about the cause and spread of WNS can be determined.

Members of the caving community have suggested targeted closures, rather than a blanket closure. Why aren't you taking a "targeted" approach?

This suggestion is based on the idea that closure of bat hibernacula is all that is needed. However, the best available information indicates that the fungus can be transmitted bat-to-bat and cave-to-bat during other seasons as well. While the location of bat concentration areas including winter hibernacula are fairly well known, bats move extensively during the summer months and may use a given cave or abandoned mine intermittently, making detection difficult. The aim of this interim emergency action is to avoid accidentally spreading the fungus into our area. During the coming year, we intend to closely monitor the situation and to work with all interested parties to determine whether there are opportunities to re-open certain caves to recreational entry and continue to minimize the biological risk.

What proof do you have that people are contributing to the spread of WNS?

The mechanism of transmission is still unknown and difficult to prove conclusively. The rapid dispersal of WNS from a single New York cave in 2006 to numerous sites in contiguous states and Canadian provinces by 2008 suggests direct bat-to-bat and bat-to-cave contact.

However, evidence collected to date indicates that human activity in caves and abandoned mines may be assisting the spread of WNS, even during seasons when bats are not occupying caves. This fungus likely can be transported inadvertently from site to site on footwear, clothing, and gear of cave visitors. The fungus can grow on many different organic materials, and appears to persist in caves and abandoned mines year-round. Fungal spores and/or other microscopic organisms can easily become attached to skin, hair, clothing, and equipment, and it is possible that spores could remain viable for weeks or months after leaving a subterranean environment.

The discontinuous nature of the rapid spread of WNS—especially to sites in West Virginia, Virginia, west Tennessee, Missouri, and western Oklahoma—suggests that a mode other than bat-to-bat transmission is contributing to the spread. The potential for the human-assisted spread of WNS is further supported by the fact that many of the recently-affected sites are also popular destinations for recreational cavers, while many bat hibernacula (caves and mines where bats hibernate) in less-popular or inaccessible caves remain unaffected. Records of caver movements also reveal a connection between sites in these affected regions, additionally suggestive of a link to human activity.

If bats transmit disease, why are you restricting human access?

Bat-to-bat is likely the primary means of transmission of WNS, but strong circumstantial evidence suggests that humans have contributed to its spread in the eastern United States. Regardless of how it is transmitted to a location, evidence shows it spreads rapidly in the affected area and results in high mortality rates in regional bat populations. Confirmation of WNS in Missouri and northwestern Oklahoma has led us to conclude that there is an unacceptably high risk of continued spread west. This closure order reduces the risk of human-caused spread in the short term, even though bat-to-bat transmission may bring WNS here eventually. A one-year closure will give us time to assess the situation and incorporate new information into future management decisions.

What is the timeframe for this emergency cave and abandoned mine closure order?

This is an emergency closure order that will be in effect for one year. We need to allow scientists time to learn more about WNS and how it spreads to and from caves and mines, and we need to expand our baseline monitoring and detection surveys to improve our ability to assess bat populations and WNS. After one year, we will evaluate the information to see if there is a need to continue or modify the closure order.

What caves and mines are covered by the emergency closure order?

The fungus associated with WNS currently is found in subterranean environments from Canada to Tennessee. At this time, all subterranean cave features and underground abandoned mines on National Forest System lands in the Rocky Mountain Region are believed to be susceptible to WNS and are included in this closure order. The Rocky Mountain Region comprises 17 national forests and 7 national grasslands in a 5-state area (Colorado and parts of Wyoming, South Dakota, Kansas and Nebraska). The Forest Service will authorize some access for administrative purposes (e.g., implementing the Abandoned Mine Lands program), research, disease surveillance, and inventory and monitoring. Specifically identified "show caves" may remain open for educational purposes. *All entries will follow the recommended decontamination protocols.*

Are other agencies and partners closing their caves?

Yes. The National Speleological Society, the Northeastern Cave Conservancy, and Southeastern Cave Conservancy have closed some of their caves. Several states have closed caves located on state lands. The National Park Service has closed all the caves within the Great Smokey Mountains National Park. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has closed the caves in the Wheeler National Wildlife Refuge Complex in Alabama, and the Ozark Plateau Refuge in Oklahoma.

What is the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service advising?

The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service issued a cave advisory on March 26, 2009:

1. *A voluntary moratorium, effective immediately, on all caving activity in states known to have hibernacula affected by White-Nose Syndrome, and all adjoining states, unless conducted as part of an agency-sanctioned research or monitoring project.*

Caves infected with WNS fungus may not show any obvious signs of its presence, and the actual geographic distribution of all affected sites is not known. Human activity in affected caves may cause fungal spores and particles to become airborne, thereby contaminating exposed materials and allowing for transport.

2. *Cavers in regions outside the White-Nose Syndrome -affected and adjacent states should be using clothing and gear that has never been used in caves or mines in the affected or adjacent states, and should thoroughly clean and contain all clothing and gear upon exiting those locations*.

Because there is a lag time between the initial point of contact with the fungus and the first visible evidence of its presence, we cannot be certain that apparently unaffected sites do not pose a risk for contamination. In order to minimize the risk that WNS could travel across state, regional or national boundaries on clothing and equipment, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife advises that clothing and equipment used outside of the affected region be decontaminated following the protocols available on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife White-Nose Syndrome web site: http://www.fws.gov/whitenosesyndrome/

How does the Closure Order affect entry into abandoned mines for prospecting, exploration or other activities authorized by the 1872 Mining Law as amended (Mining Law)?

The Closure Order excludes by definition, inactive mine openings and adits that are located on unpatented mining claims. For abandoned mines not located on mining claims the Closure Order allows entry for activities under the Mining Law provided decontamination procedures are followed. The requirement for decontamination procedures under the Closure Order can be enforced under 36 CFR 261.50(a), even if the activity involved does not trigger requirements for a Notice of Intent (Notice) or a Plan of Operation (Plan) under 36 CFR 228A.

How does the Closure Order affect requirements and procedures in 36 CFR 228A that apply to activities conducted under the authority of the Mining Law and which may involve entry into inactive mine openings and adits?

Nothing in the Closure Order limits or changes the requirements and procedures in 36 CFR 228A as it applies to activities authorized under the Mining Law. Specifically, a Notice and/or Plan may be required for activities that involve entry into abandoned mine openings and adits if the District Ranger determines that they are causing, or will likely cause significant disturbance of surface resources.

How does the Closure Order affect ongoing activities by the Forest Service (FS) or others to mitigate safety hazards, clean-up hazardous substances or otherwise reclaim abandoned mines on National Forest System (NFS) Lands?

FS personnel and anyone working under FS contract, permit, or formal agreement to mitigate safety hazards, clean up hazardous substances, or reclaim abandoned mines are exempt from the Closure Order prohibition on entering abandoned mines, provided decontamination procedures in Exhibit B are followed.

In this regard, the Colorado Department of Reclamation, Mining and Safety has provided a copy of the decontamination protocol that is being used by its personnel and

contractors. If the State protocols are being used on safety hazard or cleanup projects they meet or exceed the decontamination protocols described in Exhibit B.

Where can I find out more about WNS, cave/mine closures, and bats?

The **U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service** maintains a web site with the latest information about WNS, including a list of all cave and mine closures across the United States: http://www.fws.gov/WhiteNose Syndrome/

USGS Fort Collins Science Center WNS site: http://www.fort.usgs.gov/WNS/

The **National Speleological Society** maintains a web site that contains media stories about WNS, cave/mine closures, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's decontamination protocol: http://www.caves.org/ .

Bat Conservation International, Inc. provides an array of educational information about bats on its web site: http://www.batcon.org/ .

The **U. S. Geological Survey** has a web site that details why WNS is a concern to bat diversity, including endangered bats: http://www.fort.usgs.gov/WNS/

The **National Wildlife Health Center's** web site offers information related to the fungal pathogen tied to WNS: http://www.nwhc.usgs.gov/disease_information/white-nose_syndrome/index.jsp

Rocky Mountain Region of the U.S. Forest Service: http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/

Western Bat Working Group:
http://www.wbwg.org/conservation/whitenosesyndrome/whitenose.html