

**TEXAS PARKS AND WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ORDER NO. 010-005**

The Executive Director of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department orders the restrictions to public access to certain department lands and facilities as provided herein.

Due to the detection of White Nose Syndrome (WNS) in bat populations in nearby states, the Executive Director has determined that it is necessary to authorize staff of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (the department) to restrict public access, where necessary, to caves or other natural features on state parks, wildlife management areas, and any other lands under the management of the department, in order to prevent the possible spread of WNS as a result of human contact.

WNS is a fungal pathogen whose etiology, pathology, distribution, and dispersal have not been well studied and are not well understood. WNS is believed to disrupt the feeding and hibernation cycles of affected individuals, leading to death in almost all cases. WNS poses no threat to human beings. At the present time, WNS is not known to have spread to Texas; however, since its discovery in the northeastern United States in 2006, it has spread southward and westward and now has been detected or is suspected to exist in 14 states and two Canadian provinces, including the states of Missouri and Oklahoma. Although the mechanics of WNS transmission are not definitively known, mammalogists have recommended the closure of hibernacula (areas where bats hibernate) to human contact in order to minimize the potential spread of WNS. WNS has been detected in nine species of bats thus far (little brown bat, eastern small-footed bat, northern long-eared bat, tri-colored bat, big brown bat, Indiana bat, gray bat, cave myotis, and southeastern myotis). Because several of the species of bats known to be susceptible to WNS are found in Texas, the department believes it is prudent to identify and close to public access those areas under the control of the department where physical contact between humans and bats or bat habitat may occur.

It is therefore ordered that department staff is authorized to restrict public access, as necessary, to any feature or area under department control in order to prevent the spread of WNS. Department staff is also authorized to allow controlled access to caves and other areas under conditions prescribed by the department, including escorted visitation, limitations on activities and conduct, and decontamination protocols.

The department will prominently post those areas that are closed to public access, and will publish a list of the closed areas on the department website.

This order is issued pursuant to §81.401 of the Texas Parks and Wildlife Code, and 31 Tex. Admin. Code §59.132(a), §59.134(e), §65.192(f), §65.204(d). This order is effective immediately.

Signed this the 29th day of July, 2010.



Carter Smith
Executive Director
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department