

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**NORTHEASTERN CAVE CONSERVANCY CLOSES CAVES -  
Cavers asked to assist in combating bat deaths**

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Latham, New York –

The Northeastern Cave Conservancy voted Sunday, February 10, at an emergency Board meeting, to immediately close all its caves to visitation until at least May 15, in order to help protect thousands of hibernating bats that are threatened by a mysterious illness known as White Nose Syndrome.

The caves affected by closure include: Clarksville Cave, Ladder Cave, Knox Cave, Crossbones Cave, Ella Armstrong Cave, and Onesquethaw Cave in Albany County, and Selleck's Cave, Cave 575, and Levy's Cave in Schoharie County.

The NCC Trustees also advised all cavers – casual and otherwise – to voluntarily restrict their caving until May 15, 2008, in any cave known to host bats, and to help develop a cave visitation data base in order to assist scientists to track human movement in affected caves.

The NCC's action follows on the heels of the National Speleological Society's closure of its northeastern cave preserves, Schoharie Caverns, Barton Hill (Gage's Cave), McFail's Cave Preserve, all in New York, and Tytoona Cave Preserve, in Pennsylvania.

The NCC urgently requests anyone who visited Knox Cave, Gage Cave, Schoharie Caverns or Haile's Cave (in John Boyd Thacher State Park, owned by the state of New York) since January 1, 2007, to log onto the NCC website ([www.necaveconservancy.org](http://www.necaveconservancy.org)) and complete a cave visit log.

Respondents will then be asked to list all other caves visited since then – no matter where. By focusing on these four caves, it will enable scientists and cavers in other states and countries to look for any similar occurrences, and help determine whether people are spreading the condition.

White Nose Syndrome has been linked by scientists to the death of thousands of bats in New York and Vermont, and has been confirmed in two of the NCC Caves and two of the NSS Caves.

While no evidence at this time demonstrates that people are responsible for spreading the White Nose Syndrome, it is clear that many of the bats are under stress. Human presence generally disturbs the bats, and causes them to increase their movement and metabolism, using up precious stored resources. The NCC stressed that its advisory does not include commercial caves.