

Northern Long-Eared Bat
Myotis septentrionalis



Photo from www.stantec.com

The northern long-eared bat (NLEB) was once a commonly found species in the Appalachians. Its native range is from Montana to Maine and Canada to Louisiana. The NLEB was listed in 2015 by the US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. Threatened species are animals and plants that are likely to become endangered in the foreseeable future. As per USFWS information, White-nose Syndrome is the major threat to the species. White-nose Syndrome is a disease that mostly affects the bats during the winter hibernation period while the bats are in their hibernacula (caves, abandoned mine portals, rock crevices, etc.). Actions have been taken to try to reduce or slow the spread of white-nose syndrome through human transmission of the fungus into caves (e.g. cave and mine closures and advisories; national decontamination protocols). A national plan was prepared by the Service and other state and federal agencies that details actions needed to investigate and manage white-nose syndrome. Many state and federal agencies, universities and non-governmental organizations are researching this disease to try to control its spread and address its affect.

Based on guidance information provided by the USFWS, the Mined Land Repurposing program and the Virginia Coal Industry are taking steps to reduce and offset any potential impacts to the remaining NLEB populations located within the Virginia coalfields. The major strategies being implemented are voluntarily taking a time of year restriction for any tree clearing activity within 150 feet radius of a known NLEB maternal roost tree (tree in which the female bats have their young) or within 0.25 mile radius of a known NLEB hibernaculum. The Virginia Coal Industry is also actively reforesting disturbed mine lands to create additional potential NLEB habitat.