

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 13, 2015

The Honorable Dan Ashe
Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Director Ashe:

We write to express our concern about the impact of white-nose syndrome on the northern long-eared bat (NLEB) and the potential listing of the bat under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

With white-nose syndrome (WNS) occurring in only 17 of the 39 states that constitute the NLEB's range, the U.S. forest products industry, along with other stakeholders, have called into question actions taken and proposals offered thus far by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to preserve the bat. If during the final review process the USFWS determines it necessary to list the northern long-eared bat as threatened, we urge you to issue a rule under Section 4(d) of the ESA concurrently in order to allow normal forest management practices and minimize economic impacts in our states.

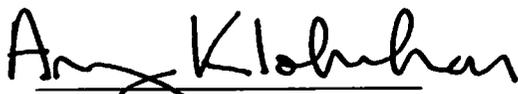
In January 2014, the USFWS released Northern Long-eared Bat Interim Conference and Planning Guidance designed to answer questions it received from various federal agencies on how best to reduce harmful impacts to the bat and its habitat through certain conservation measures and activities. Since the release of this guidance, we have heard numerous concerns about the potential negative impacts these recommendations would have on forest economies if implemented, including the prohibition on harvesting timber from April 1 to September 30 each year.

The challenges that affected industries in our states would face should a threatened listing be issued could be minimized through practical and flexible solutions provided in a special rule under Section 4(d) of the ESA. By issuing a special 4(d) rule concurrently with a threatened listing, the USFWS could reduce harm to bat populations, while at the same time allowing certain typical forest and land management activities to continue. Additionally, we urge you to revise the Interim Conference and Planning Guidance to reflect the conservation benefits from normal forest management activities to northern long-eared bats concurrent with your listing decision.

By working together we can ensure the health of our forests, and maintain forest communities and local economies, while preserving the northern long-eared bat for generations to come.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,


Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator


Kelly Ayotte
United States Senator


Thad Cochran
United States Senator

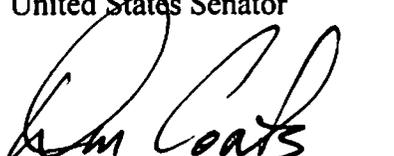

Susan Collins
United States Senator


John Thune
United States Senator


Claire McCaskill
United States Senator


Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator

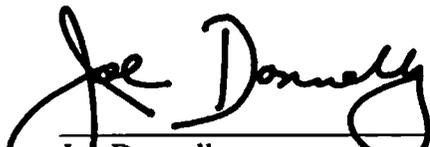

Al Franken
United States Senator


Daniel Coats
United States Senator


Roy Blunt
United States Senator


John Boozman
United States Senator


Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator


Joe Donnelly
United States Senator

Cc: The Honorable Sally Jewell, Secretary, U.S. Department of Interior
Cc: Chairman Michael Boots, White House Council on Environmental Quality