



## Northern Long-eared Bat

(*Myotis septentrionalis*)

**Status:** Federal Endangered



Credit: Brittany Fernald

**About the Northern Long-eared Bat:** Northern long-eared bats (NLEBs) are known to inhabit 37 states and 9 provinces in North America. This species typically overwinters in caves or mines and spends the rest of the year in forested habitats. Under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA), the NLEB was designated as a threatened species by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) in 2015, primarily due to population declines resulting from white-nose syndrome. Since the original listing in 2015, the disease has spread across the range of NLEBs and has decimated its populations. Without intervention, the northern long-eared bat will likely be extinct as soon as 2030.

**Change in Protected Status:** To avoid extinction of this bat, the Service announced in November 2022 that it is reclassifying the NLEB as endangered, under the federal ESA, as of March 31, 2023. Information pertaining to this action can be found at: <https://www.fws.gov/species/northern-long-eared-bat-myotis-septentrionalis>.

**This is a federal action and not an action of the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources. However, we are making this information available in an effort to assist our partners. Last updated: April 18, 2023**

### What this Endangered Listing Means

1. **The federal action included requirements for projects that have federal connections—e.g., federally permitted, federally funded, federally authorized, or federally carried out.** Those requirements are found in the following guidance issued by the Service. <https://www.fws.gov/library/collections/interim-consultation-framework-northern-long-eared-bat>
2. **The federal action also included specific guidance for wind energy projects.** <https://www.fws.gov/library/collections/interim-wind-guidance-northern-long-eared-bat>
3. **For all other projects, the federal action does not impose any requirements.** Those conducting these projects, however, should be aware that potential liability does exist under the federal Endangered Species Act if a take of a NLEB (including habitat modification) occurs, and so voluntary action to avoid incidental take of NLEB may be advisable. To create a process for this, the Service released Interim Voluntary Guidance, which is expected to be effective until April 1, 2024, at which time there may be updates. <https://www.fws.gov/media/interim-voluntary-guidance-northern-long-eared-bat-forest-habitat-modification>

### What the Service's Interim Voluntary Guidance Says for Those Who Fall Under #3 Above (see Pages 2-4 of the Guidance at the Link Immediately Above)

1. **Any action is voluntary on the part of the person conducting the project.** While it is a voluntary decision, liability under the federal Endangered Species Act may exist in the event of a take of a NLEB (including habitat modification), and thus review and preventative measures may be highly advisable to individual projects.
2. **A threshold question for determining whether incidental take may occur is whether a project is in an area where presence of the NLEB has been documented.** See the map at end of this document. *An interactive map will be available from DWR's website very soon and will be updated periodically.* If the project is located outside of these areas, no further action is needed, as the Service is not currently assuming that take is

reasonably certain to occur where presence of NLEB has not been documented.

3. If a project is located within one of the areas indicated on the map, the Interim Voluntary Guidance provides the option of conducting a site-specific presence/probable absence survey to further seek to determine if the bat is present on the site or not. Alternatively, projects also have the option of simply assuming presence, and electing to avoid and/or minimize impacts as further described.
4. After evaluating the considerations above and otherwise found in the Voluntary Guidance, if the activity is in a known location or presence is assumed, there are steps to ensure that take is not reasonably certain to occur (see “Step 2” on page 4 of the guidance). This includes avoiding activities including tree clearing, prescribed fire, and habitat modification during certain times. These times of the year are understood to be between the dates of December 15-February 15 and April 15-July 30 in the area shown on the map as “NLEB Year-Round Presence”, and between April 1 and November 14 elsewhere in Virginia.
5. Finally, if it is determined that a project is located in an area where northern long-eared bats may be present, and activities cannot be avoided during the times noted above, or for questions, it is recommended that you contact the federal Fish and Wildlife Service’s local Ecological Field Services Office for an appropriate course of action. For Virginia, contact information can be found at: <https://www.fws.gov/office/virginia-ecological-services/visit-us/locations/virginia-ecological-services-field-office>.

### Northern Long-eared Bat Regulatory Buffers (as of 04/18/2023)

This map will be routinely updated. Please access the interactive application for the most up-to-date buffer locations.

