

May 14, 2010

## **Risk of deadly bat disease spreading to Alberta closes popular cave**

### ***Province temporarily closes Cadomin Cave near Hinton***

*Edmonton...* The province has temporarily closed Cadomin Cave in Whitehorse Wildland Provincial Park near Hinton to lessen the risk of White-Nose Syndrome spreading to bats in Alberta.

Provincial researchers are monitoring the situation closely as the disease has recently spread from northeastern United States to Ontario and Quebec, causing high mortality in bat populations there. Since 2006, the disease has killed more than one million bats in northeastern United States.

The disease is not a threat to humans, but it is believed humans are spreading the disease when they explore caves.

“We recognize Cadomin is one of the top caving sites in Alberta,” said Cindy Ady, Minister of Tourism, Parks and Recreation. “It is also Alberta’s largest known bat hibernation site, and science is telling us that we need to do what’s right and close the cave to the public this year.”

Access to Cadomin Cave will be by permit only, for researchers conducting bat population monitoring activities. Cadomin Cave is considered to be at the highest risk of exposure to the disease in Alberta, with up to 800 bats in the cave.

Bats play an integral role in functioning ecosystems, as well as limiting nuisance species, such as mosquitoes.

“My department shares the growing concerns regarding White-Nose Syndrome in bats,” said Mel Knight, Minister of Sustainable Resource Development. “Anyone visiting caves or mines where bats occur should be aware of the basic precautions to avoid spreading this disease to new sites, and especially avoid bringing it to Alberta.”

More information on Cadomin Cave and White-Nose Syndrome is available at [www.albertaparks.ca/knowB4UGo.aspx](http://www.albertaparks.ca/knowB4UGo.aspx).

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