

## **Huntsville Grotto Policy Regarding WNS**

With alarming data becoming available concerning the emergence and spread of White Nose Syndrome (WNS), it has become necessary for the Huntsville Grotto, as a chartered member of the NSS, to announce an interim policy for its members in regards to WNS.

The Grotto has undertaken an effort to educate the Grotto membership at large about WNS, and although the mechanism for the spread of WNS is not clearly understood at this time, the Grotto membership fully recognizes the catastrophic effects of the unknown contagion linked to WNS. The Grotto acknowledges the need for taking a number of safeguarding measures that may be critical in limiting the spread of an unknown contagion within the bat population of the United States.

The Grotto intends to continue to abide by the advisories and recommendations of the NSS, all State and Federal agencies, and cave conservation groups including the SCCi. Also, the Grotto will abide by the requests of private land owners as well. It should be noted that as of this posting, the Nashville, Chattanooga, and Cullman grottos have also announced that they will follow the policy of the NSS in regards to WNS.

At this time, the Huntsville Grotto is putting into place a policy requesting that its members abide by a moratorium on caving in Tennessee or any other listed WNS states or border states. If WNS spreads further, this policy will be updated to include any newly affected areas.

Per this interim policy, the Huntsville Grotto will continue to lead organized cave trips in caves that are not put on a moratorium list by the above agencies or groups. The Grotto will be asking that anyone caving with the Huntsville Grotto, or on their own, decontaminate their horizontal gear. Although proper and safe methods of decontamination are not fully agreed to at this time, minimum guidelines have been developed. These guidelines will be published by the Grotto's Decontamination Committee for dissemination to its members and interested parties. Committee members, Tony Amundson and James DeForest, will welcome any ideas or updated information pertinent to this effort.

In an effort to combat the catastrophic spread of this contagion, the Huntsville Grotto fully intends to support those who are studying WNS and to disseminate news and educational materials to agencies, interested groups, non-affiliated cavers, and landowners. Grotto members will be requested to be on the watch for signs of WNS during cave trips and will be asked to report any possible sightings.

From the Executive Board of the Huntsville Grotto----- April 14, 2009