

# White-Nose Syndrome and the Northern Long-Eared Bat

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# Background

- Northern long-eared bat (NLEB)
  - Occurs in 37 states
  - Lives in caves and mines during winter
  - Spends the summer feeding and raising young in forests
  - Eats hundreds of insects each day including many forest and agricultural pests



# Background (cont.)

- USFWS identified White-nose syndrome (WNS) as primary threat to NLEB
- WNS is caused by a fungus that was likely introduced from Europe
- NLEBs exposed to WNS experience significant declines

Little brown bat with WNS, Dickinson Co., MI. Photo: A. Kurta, Eastern MI Univ.



# WNS in Michigan

- Currently found in 11 Counties
- Winter die-offs occurred this winter at multiple sites
- We expect to lose 50-90% of cave dwelling bats over the next 2 years.



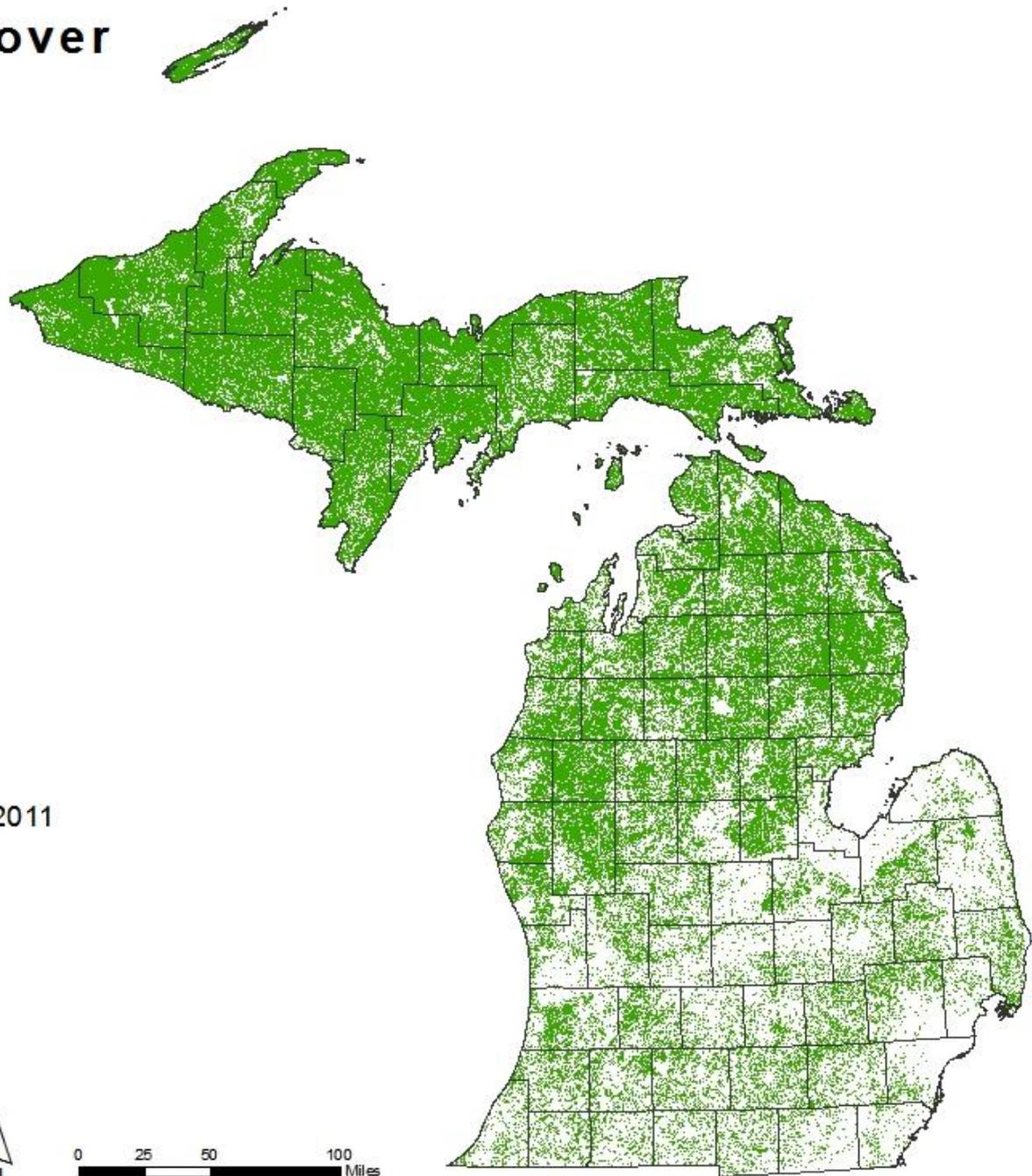
# Michigan's Concerns

- October 2, 2013, USFWS proposed to list the NLEB as an endangered species.
  - Interim Conference and Planning Guidance
  - Defined NLEB summer habitat as “forests and woodlots containing potential roosts...”
  - Recommendation included: “avoid killing or injuring NLEB during tree clearing activities.”
- Michigan was concerned about potential impacts to sustainable forest management, wildlife management, trail maintenance, oil/gas/mineral.



# Forested Land Cover In Michigan

 Forested Land Cover 2011



Michigan Department of Natural Resources  
Forest Resources Division  
Resource Assessment Section  
May 12, 2015



0 25 50 100 Miles

# DNR Leadership

- DNR has provided leadership at a national level
- Provided common sense solutions that were scientifically defensible
- Helped draft comment letter submitted to USFWS and signed by the following regional associations:
  - Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
  - Southeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
  - The Southern Group of State Foresters
  - The Northeastern Area Association of State Foresters



# USFWS's Determination

- April 2, 2015 - listed the NLEB as threatened with a interim 4(d) rule under the Endangered Species Act
- A 4(d) rule can only be used for threatened species
- A 4(d) rule exempts activities that are considered a conservation benefit to the species
- Both became law on May 4, 2015



# Interim 4(d) Rule: Exempted Activities

- Removal of NLEBs from human structures
- Removal of hazard trees for protection of human life and property
- Four types of activities when three conservation measures are followed.
  - Forest management
  - Maintenance and expansion of existing rights-of-way and transmission corridors
  - Prairie management
  - Minimal tree removal projects



# Conservation Measures

1. Occur more than 0.25 mile from a known, occupied hibernacula



Photo: A. Kurta, EMU



Photo: A. Kurta, EMU



Photo: A. Kurta, EMU



# Conservation Measures (cont.)

2. Avoid cutting or destroying known, occupied roost trees during the pup season (June 1-July 31)
3. Avoid clearcuts within 0.25 mile of known, occupied roost trees during the pup season (June 1-July 31)



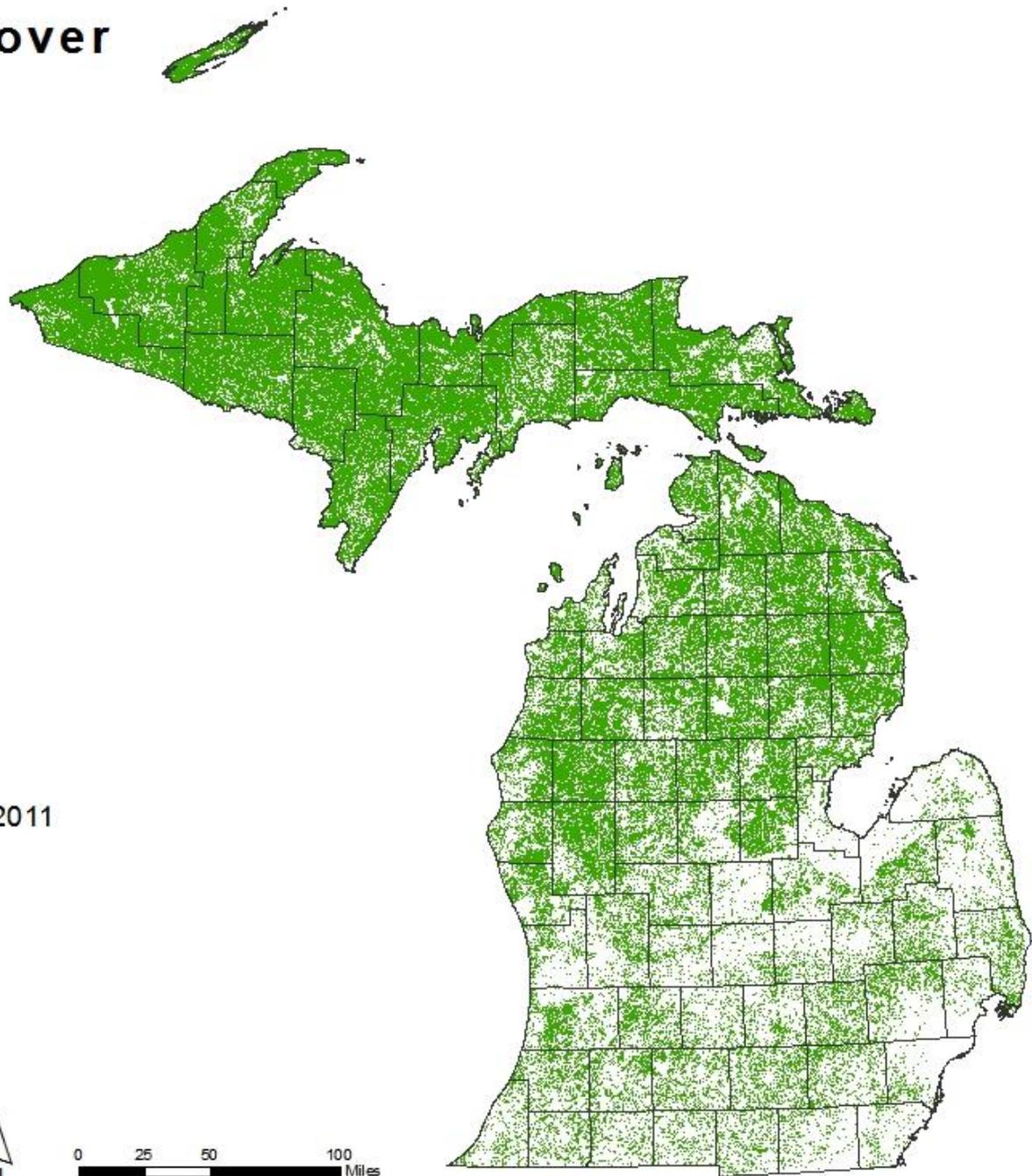
# Potential Impacts Minimized

- Potential impacts to sustainable forest and wildlife management should be minimal
  - In counties with NLEB, less than 0.25% of public and private forest impacted
- 717 acres or 0.016% of DNR managed land
  - 348 acres on state forest land
  - 369 acres on state park land
  - 85 acres of proposed treatments impacted



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 Forested Land Cover 2011



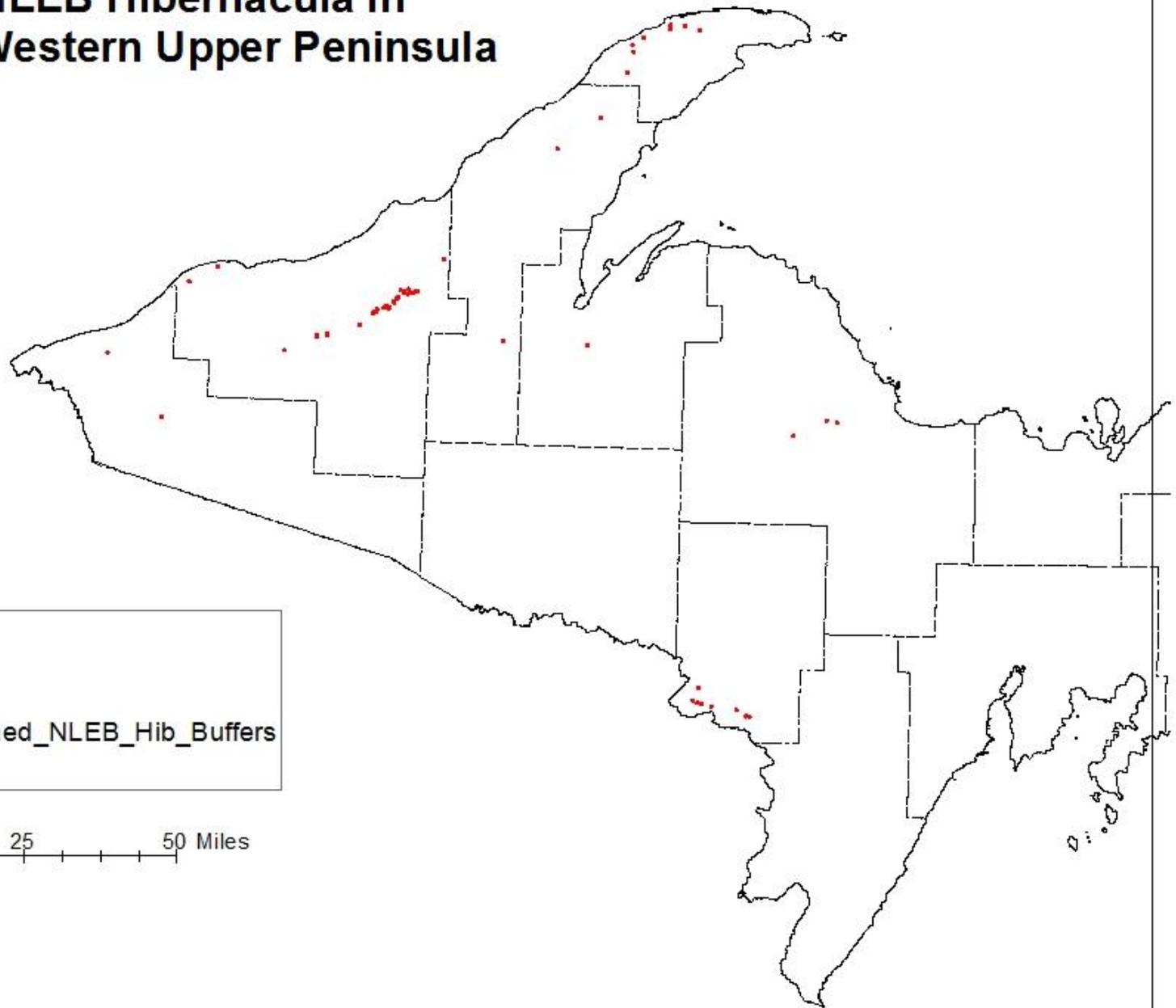
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0 25 50 100 Miles



# Known NLEB Hibernacula in Michigan's Western Upper Peninsula



## Legend



Confirmed\_NLEB\_Hib\_Buffers

0 12.5 25 50 Miles



# MI DNR Supports USFWS's Decision

- Michigan DNR supports USFWS's NLEB decision
- Biologically sound determination that addresses NLEB conservation needs and provides flexibility for those who live and work within the bat's range
- The Michigan DNR continues to work with other States and the USFWS to find solutions to this conservation challenge



# Still Time to Comment

- The NLEB interim 4(d) rule is still under review
  - Additional comments accepted until July 1, 2015
  - Finalized by December 2015



Questions?

