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Subject: Updated Bat Guidance for NRCS and SWCP
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Hello Missouri Conservation Team,

I wanted to share important updates regarding the implementation of the Programmatic Biological Opinion/Conference Opinion (PBO/CO) with US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for program actions affecting bat species. Effective immediately, Missouri NRCS has been granted a “pause” on PBO/CO implementation, which will help us transition into a new consultation framework. During this period, USFWS has approved NRCS to provide Endangered Species Act coverage for DNR Soil and Water Program activities, so please take note of the following guidance for NRCS Farm Bill Programs and Missouri Soil and Water Conservation Programs:

- Trees <9”DBH can be felled anytime of the year **for all practices**.
- Trees ≥9” DBH should be felled during the winter season from October 16-March 31st. If that is not possible follow guidance below.
 - These actions are most likely to cause “take” of a listed bat species. USFWS is now providing flexibility and allowing some felling during the active bat season (April 1-October 15) but **reporting of these acres is required**.
 - **When felling of trees ≥9” DBH during the active season is needed**, submit a request to the Area Biologist prior to implementation of action with requested information (to be determined), including justification. After implementation, a report must be submitted to track actual acres of “take”. We will continue to make every effort to cut larger trees during the winter season but now have flexibility in those instances when it can’t be done in the winter season or there are extenuating circumstances.
- Eastern red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) and all non-native invasive trees, such as Callery/Bradford pear, tree-of-heaven, Siberian elm, etc., may be removed at any time, regardless of size or location.

This streamlined guidance is designed to offer reduced burden and greater flexibility to you as planners, as well as to our clients and contractors, and will remain in place until a formal amendment to the PBO/CO is completed and replaces it. I will work with the Area Biologist and our State Biologist in the next week to provide information on the process to request and report acres, and updates to the CPA-52.

Thank you for your attention to these updates and patience as we continue to provide guidance.

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