

**Opening Statement
Chairman Raúl M. Grijalva
Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands with
Subcommittee on Insular Affairs, Oceans and Wildlife
Joint Oversight Hearing
White-nose Syndrome: What's killing Bats in the Northeast
June 4, 2009**

Thank you Chairwoman Bordallo.

From the television show C-S-I to dozens of national publications; White-nose syndrome and dying bats have captured the curiosity of the American public. However, the lack of information about this problem and its greater impacts on communities is what caught my attention.

What we know is that bats play an important role in the ecosystems within which they are found. We also know that in the Northeast, shocking numbers of bats have been dying, and the problem is spreading. Beyond that, serious questions exist about how the bats are dying, how we stop the spread of this fungus, and how this will impact the people who live in these regions?

When we are faced with a threat like White-nose syndrome, it is

my hope that Federal Agencies can coordinate and respond in a timely manner to answer these types of questions. I look forward to hearing testimony about how we can help facilitate the process, so we can address this particular outbreak before it sweeps across the country.

This challenge is not isolated to White-nose syndrome. Likely, with the growing impact of climate change, we will need to respond to more and more unknown diseases and unprecedented deaths in animal populations. Our ability to determine the level of response necessary will be key to minimizing the impacts of these threats.

I want to thank all of our witnesses for making the trip here today, and I look forward to hearing their testimony.