

## US proposes protections for decimated bat

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MONTPELIER, Vt. — The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said Thursday it had proposed granting Endangered Species Act protection to the northern long-eared bat, a species that had been devastated by a disease known as white-nose syndrome.

But the service said it had determined that the eastern small-footed bat does not warrant protection. It made the announcement a day after a deal was reached to end a 16-day partial government shutdown.

The fungal disease white nose syndrome has killed an estimated 5.5 million bats in the U.S. and Canada, federal officials said. The population of northern long-eared bats has plummeted by 99 percent in the Northeast since the disease was detected in 2006, the service said.

The service will now take public comment on the proposal for 60 days. It will then evaluate the information over a year to decide whether the bat species will be protected.

The Center for Biological Diversity and WildEarth Guardians petitioned the federal government in 2010 to list the northern long-eared bat and the eastern small-footed bat under the Endangered Species Act.