



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Helping People Help the Land

An Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer



Access Control- Hibernacula Gate

Conservation Practice Job Sheet

NH-472

Do you have a cave, tunnel, or mine on your property? If so, you may have a “bat hibernaculum”—an area that is used by bats to hibernate through the cold winter months. Fewer than 10 official bat hibernacula are known in New Hampshire, so if you have one on your property, you are the guardian of a rare treasure.



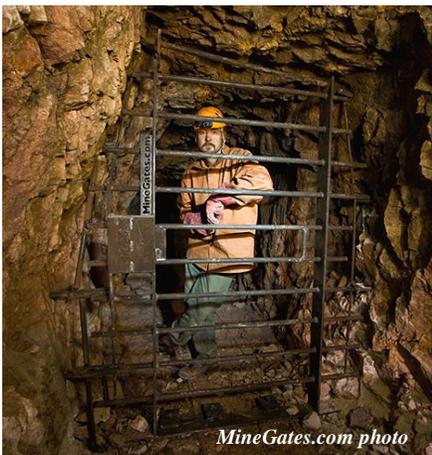
Indiana DNR photo

NH Fish & Game will need to document bats within your cave in order to install a bat gate. If you believe or know that you have bats in your cave, do not go inside! Instead, call Fish & Game at (603) 271-2461 and explain your situation.

Even a small opening can lead to hibernaculum.

Bats protect your property from insects: they eat up to half their weight in insects every night. Bats do not feed while they are hibernating in winter, but they eat many insects near the hibernaculum in the months before and after hibernation. Although bats are voracious insect predators, they are also fragile creatures. Multiple species of bats are declining throughout New England, and bats are especially vulnerable to human disturbance when they hibernate during late fall and winter.

A functional bat gate **WILL**



MineGates.com photo

Prevent humans from using or vandalizing your cave, and may also result in fewer people trespassing on your property.

Prevent your bats from being harassed by humans as they hibernate during winter. Some hibernacula are also used in the spring and summer by a few bats.

Help to give your bats a fighting chance against the devastating white nose



Marvin Moriarty / USFWS photo

syndrome fungus. This fungus causes bats to wake up and search for food during the winter, which usually leads to the bat's starvation or hypothermia and ultimately death. Bats can also wake up if humans are simply walking inside the hibernaculum, and waking up leads to depletion of the bat's energy stores. The fewer disturbances to bats, the healthier they are.



NHFG Staff photo

A few things to know....

Installing a bat gate will not keep bats out of your hibernacula. Bat gates keep out *people*, and help bats by reducing human disturbance during winter, as bats' immune systems try to fight the white nose fungus.

The installation process will not break your wallet—Federal and state agencies have all the expertise needed to help you install your bat gate. You would need to provide only some of the funds or labor. (See the Act Now! section on the next page).

To survive through the winter, hibernating bats need a sanctuary for sleeping undisturbed.



NPS Staff photo

Bat gates will not restrict you from your mine or tunnel—you will have access to get inside by using a key, but we ask that you not go inside during the winter.

Bat gates do not cause white nose fungus to grow in your cave. This fungus is brought into hibernacula by already infected bats, and potentially by humans that are carrying the fungus on their clothes and gear.

Bat gates are designed to keep out people only—they cannot prevent white nose fungus from growing in your cave. If the fungus is not in your hibernaculum, a functional bat gate will prevent humans from accidentally bringing the fungus into your hibernaculum, but bats themselves can still bring in the fungus.



Indiana DNR photo

Even small entrances such as this one can be gated.

How a bat gate is installed

There are many different styles of bat-friendly gates. Hibernaculum entrances of all types—small, large, vertical, and flush with the ground—can be gated. Bat gates in New Hampshire are created at the hibernaculum entrance and look very similar to the one pictured at right, although they are of varying sizes. Private landowners are able to enter the hibernacula by unlocking a removable metal rod.



MineGates.com photo

Bat gates are created by welding horizontal steel bars to upright crossbars that extend from the top part of the hibernacula entrance into the ground. One of the horizontal bars is

locked instead of welded into place, allowing landowner access inside the hibernaculum.



Indiana DNR photo

Act now!

The Natural Resources Conservation Service and the New Hampshire Fish & Game Department will help you install your bat gate. They provide the expertise and the materials, and will match with you funds or labor, or a combination of the two.

To start talking about gating a hibernaculum, please contact:



MineGates.com photo

Emily Brunkhurst, Wildlife Biologist
New Hampshire Fish & Game Department
(603) 271-2461
Emily.brunkhurst@wildlife.nh.gov

Donald Keirstead
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
(603) 868-9931 ext. 128
donald.keirstead@nh.usda.gov