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News Release

For Immediate Release

No White-nose Syndrome in Sequiota Bats

Laboratory test results show no evidence of white-nose syndrome among the bat population in the cave at Sequiota Park.

White-nose syndrome is a fungal disease fatal to bats, but is not harmful to humans or other animals. Lab samples were taken from the Springfield-Greene County Park Board's Sequiota Cave March 26, following the unusually early migration of a colony of gray bats which lives in the cave during the summer. Because gray bats are an endangered species, the cave is closed every year after the migration.

Researchers at the U.S. Geological Survey's National Wildlife Health Center in Madison, Wis., examined the samples under microscope, which would show presence of white-nose syndrome, and through DNA-sequencing, which would show exposure to the fungus. Both tests came back negative.

Dr. Lynn Robbins, professor of Biology at Missouri State University, collected the samples at Sequiota Cave. He said the test results are a welcome relief.

"We will continue our surveys in the area and would appreciate any information on abnormal behavior or sign of infection of bats near caves," said Robbins, who reminds residents to always avoid handling bats, which can carry rabies and other diseases.

White-nose syndrome was first documented in the northeast US in 2006. Since then, it has spread westward, killing millions of bats, with a near 100-percent mortality rate at many sites. Now found in 19 states and four Canadian provinces, Missouri's first confirmed cases came earlier this month in Lincoln County, north of St. Louis. The disease has not been found in southwest Missouri.

Since 2007 the Springfield-Greene County Park Board has coordinated with the Missouri Department of Conservation, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Missouri State University and others to monitor bat activity and watch for signs of white-nose syndrome in the area.

Parks Community Recreation Supervisor Melvin Johnson gives guided boat tours of Sequiota Cave every spring as part of the Park Board's Outdoor Initiatives program. Cave tours ended early this year due to the early bat arrival.

"We're very happy the test results are negative, but Sequiota Cave remains closed, as it does every summer, to protect the endangered gray bats and other bats who live inside," said Johnson. "Cave and bat awareness is not new to Parks, and we'll continue to monitor these bats for any

signs of distress or disease. We hope visitors to Sequiota Park will respect the signs we've posted at the cave and leave these bats alone."

For more information, call Dr. Lynn Robbins, Missouri State University Biology professor, at 417-836-5366; Melvin Johnson, Community Recreation Supervisor of Springfield-Greene County Park Board's Outdoor Initiatives Program, at 417-833-8647; or Jenny Fillmer Edwards, Public Information Administrator for the Springfield-Greene County Park Board, at 417-874-2176 or 417-224-5510.

Additional information on white-nose syndrome is available at: www.WhiteNoseSyndrome.org