

(S.D.)-Black Hills Caves To Reopen For Exploration With Restrictions

By: Roxie Graham-Marski Posted at: 07/08/2013 07:34 AM

RAPID CITY, S.D. (ASSOCIATED PRESS) - Officials say a ban on cave exploration in the Black Hills National Forest is being partially lifted in August.

The U.S. Forest Service imposed the ban in July 2010 to prevent the spread of a deadly bat disease. White-nose syndrome has devastated some bat populations in other states.

Officials say the caves will be open under certain conditions.

Cavers will be required to use a free online registration system that is now under development. They will have to agree to certain terms, including a mandate that they will use only new caving gear that does not come from one of the 22 states where the disease has been detected.

Every piece of equipment, including shoes, must be decontaminated before and after entering a cave.