

## **FEATURE – SAVING BATS TO HELP AGRICULTURE**

**INTRO:** Many people are afraid of them, but bats are very useful to farmers. That's why USDA is partnering with groups to protect bats and bat habitat. The USDA's Bob Ellison has more. (1:53)

**BATS SCARE A LOT OF PEOPLE. BUT THEY ARE IMPORTANT TO U-S AGRICULTURE. THE U-S DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE'S NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE IS WORKING WITH LOCAL GROUPS TO PROTECT BAT HABITATS LIKE THE AREA AROUND BRACKEN CAVE NEAR SAN ANTONIO TEXAS.**

Merlin Tuttle, Bat Conservation International: This is Bracken Cave, home of the largest remaining bat population on our entire planet. It's just one of dozens of key sites that the Natural Resources Conservation Service has helped protect over the last decade.

**BATS HELP FARMERS BY POLLINATING CROPS AND DEVOURING HUGE NUMBERS OF INSECTS.**

Tuttle: This is a Mexican free-tailed bat. And tonight this one bat is capable of catching up to 40 or more corn earworm or armyworm moths over surrounding croplands. Each one of those moths could be carrying as much as a thousand eggs. Many organic farmers are now relying heavily on bats in integrated pest management. They build houses for up to 2000 bats at a time in their orchards and several have actually ceased using pesticides as a result of having successfully attracted bats.

**N-R-C-S IS WORKING WITH LANDOWNERS TO MAINTAIN BAT HABITAT AND SOURCES OF FOOD AND WATER.**

Merlin Tuttle, Bat Conservation International: Private landowners can help by maintaining clean, open sources of water where bats can drink, can maintain hedge rows and forest edges where bats can travel to and from feeding areas without being caught by owls, and can help protect roost sites, everything from old snags to mines and caves.

**AND NRCS HAS WORKED WITH TUTTLE TO INFORM FARMERS ON BAT HABITATS.**

Pete Heard, USDA NRCS: When our district conservationist makes recommendations to landowners they need to be heeled with the best information we can provide.

**FOR THE U-S DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, I'M BOB ELLISON.**