

Draft Peer Review Plan

About the Document

Title: Listing evaluation for the yellow-billed loon – biological status review document

Timeline of the Peer Review

Draft document to be disseminated: January 2014 (TBD)

Peer review to be initiated: January 2014 (TBD)

Peer review to be completed by: January-February 2014 (3 week review)

Final decision on listing evaluation expected: September 30, 2014

About the Peer Review Process:

In accordance with our July 1, 1994 peer review policy (59 FR 34270) and the Office of Management and Budget's December 16, 2004 Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service intends to subject the biological section of this document to peer review. The Service will nominate potential peer reviewers. We will consider the following criteria for any potential nomination:

- **Expertise:** The reviewer should be an expert on yellow-billed loon or similar species biology.
- **Independence:** The reviewer should not be employed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Academic, consulting or government scientists should have sufficient independence from the Service and State fish and game agencies if government supports their work.
- **Objectivity:** The reviewer should be recognized by his or her peers as being objective, open-minded, and thoughtful. In addition, the reviewer should be comfortable sharing his or her knowledge and perspectives and openly identifying his or her knowledge gaps.
- **Conflict of Interest:** The reviewer should not have any financial or other interest that conflicts or that could impair his or her objectivity or create an unfair competitive advantage. If an otherwise qualified reviewer has an unavoidable conflict of interest, the Service may publicly disclose the conflict.

While expertise is the primary consideration, the Service will select peer reviewers (considering, but not limited to, these nominations) that add to a diversity of scientific perspectives relevant to the biological section of the listing evaluation for the yellow-billed loon. Responses will be requested by ****DATE****. We will not be providing financial compensation to peer reviewers. We will solicit reviews from at least three qualified experts.

The Service will provide each peer reviewer with information explaining their role and instructions for fulfilling that role, the biological section of the listing evaluation for the yellow-billed loon, and a list of citations. The purpose of seeking independent peer review is to ensure use of the best scientific and commercial information available and to ensure and to maximize the quality, objectivity, utility, and integrity of the information upon which the biological section of the listing evaluation is based, as well as to ensure that reviews by recognized experts are incorporated into the document preparation process. Peer reviewers will be advised that they are not to provide advice on policy. Rather, they should focus their review on identifying and characterizing scientific uncertainties. Peer reviewers will be asked to answer questions pertaining to the logic of our assumptions, arguments, and conclusions and to provide any other relevant comments, criticisms, or thoughts. Reviewers will be asked whether the following aspects of yellow-billed loon biology have been accurately described, and whether available scientific information has been fully considered, or if there is additional scientific information that should be incorporated:

- (1) Taxonomy and species description;
- (2) Distribution;
- (3) Habitat and life history; and
- (4) Status and trend.

Peer reviewers will provide individual, written responses to the Service. Peer reviewers will be advised that their reviews, including their names and affiliations, will (1) be included in the administrative record of our final determination regarding this evaluation (i.e., a proposed rule or a “not warranted” petition finding), and (2), be available to the public upon request once all reviews are completed. We will summarize and respond to the issues raised by the peer reviewers in the record supporting our final rulemaking determination. A final determination regarding this listing evaluation is expected by September 30, 2014.

About Public Participation

The peer review process will be initiated shortly. We will accept comments on the peer review plan until January 6, 2014. You may submit comments by the following methods:

- U.S. mail or hand-delivery: Yellow-billed Loon Peer Review Plan, Attn.: Neesha Stellrecht, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 101 12th Ave., Room 110, Fairbanks, AK 99701
- Email: neesha_stellrecht@fws.gov, Subject line: Yellow-billed Loon Peer Review Plan

Contact

For more information, contact Neesha Stellrecht, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Fairbanks Fish and Wildlife Field Office, telephone 907-456-0297. Persons who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 800-877-8339.