

**Trinity River Restoration Program
Peer Review Guidelines**

May 2013

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TRINITY RIVER RESTORATION PROGRAM SCIENTIFIC PEER REVIEW GUIDELINES

1 INTRODUCTION

This document provides a general process for peer review of scientific documents for the Trinity River Restoration Program (TRRP or Program). Peer review is a process by which technical experts provide unbiased comments, suggestions, and evaluation of the science and technology of proposals, study plans, reports of data analyses and syntheses, draft manuscripts, and other documents. Peer review provides evaluation of the technical quality and relevancy of a document in stating and addressing hypotheses, accurately describing context and concepts, and in meeting the objectives of the program. Accurate and timely information transfer is a necessary component of all publicly funded programs. Peer reviews will be conducted in accordance with Instructions to Peer Reviewers (Appendix A).

2 ROLE OF PEER REVIEW

2.1 Rationale

Peer review of proposals, study plans, monitoring plans, sampling protocols, publications, reports, and other Program products improves the quality of scientific research by incorporating the knowledge of other expert scientists and by ensuring that studies conducted can withstand the rigorous scrutiny of the scientific community. The credibility of scientific research is enhanced by conveying to other scientists, policy-makers, managers, and the public the knowledge that the work conducted has met accepted standards of rigor and accountability. Effective peer review can help foster scientific assessments that are fundamentally sound and that increase the broad acceptance of management decisions based on that science. Peer review ultimately improves the quality of the science by providing independent subject matter expertise on focal areas within the Program.

2.2 Peer Review Policy

In 2004, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) published *Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review* to provide government-wide guidance on peer reviews of scientific information. The bulletin requires important scientific information to be peer reviewed before dissemination by the federal government, and establishes stricter requirements for “highly influential scientific assessments.” In this bulletin, the OMB acknowledges that different types of peer review are appropriate for different types of information, and grants federal agencies broad discretion in selecting appropriate peer review mechanisms. It does, however, establish minimum standards for when peer review is required and the types of peer reviews to be considered under different circumstances (OMB 2004). The OMB’s requirements and recommendations are incorporated into the TRRP peer review process described in Section 3, and specifically noted where appropriate.

2.3 Peer Review Criteria

The process described in this document should be used for products (i.e., proposals, plans, models, data, reports, protocols) funded by the Program or for other products essential to meeting Program milestones. All products released by and relied upon by the Program to influence management decisions may be subjected to the following peer review process managed by the Science Coordinator/Implementation Branch Chief under the oversight of the Executive Director with advice from the Science Advisory Board (SAB) and Technical Work Groups.

The following categories of TRRP products are required to undergo peer review (either internal or external) before finalization:

- Investigation plans, project designs, protocols and reports for ongoing monitoring activities that undergo an initial and periodic peer review
- Program reports
- Modifications to ongoing monitoring, proposals or project design activities that would be considered substantive (greater than a 10 percent change in scope)
- Other Program products for public distribution

2.4 Levels of Peer Review

The OMB directs agencies to choose a peer review mechanism that is “adequate, giving due consideration to the novelty and complexity of the science to be reviewed, the relevance of the information to decision-making, the extent of prior peer reviews and the expected benefits and costs of additional review” (OMB 2004). The TRRP has three levels of peer review: internal, external (simple) and external (with panel).

Internal Peer Review

Internal peer review is utilized when a previous version or similar document has already undergone external peer review and there is less than a 10 percent change in data presentation or methods utilized. An internal peer review is conducted by TRRP partner agency staff associated with the Program.

External Peer Review (simple)

External peer review (simple) is utilized for each new work product or when substantive changes have been made to an existing report, including new scientific findings. An external peer review is an assessment by independent peers from outside the Program who are not associated directly or indirectly with the information under review and whose background and expertise puts them on par technically and scientifically with the authors of the information (Section 4.3).

External Peer Review (with panel)

In some cases, when time and resources warrant, panels are preferable to individual external reviews as they tend to be more deliberative and reviewers can learn from one another (OMB 2004). Panels are often convened when a work product covers multiple disciplines, such as the draft TRRP Science Work Plan which was reviewed by a panel in 2012 (Fiscal Year 2013 work plan). The following criteria will be used for determining when it is appropriate to convene the SAB or an external peer review panel (with External Review Facilitator), when

recommended by the SAB, who will meet either face-to-face or via teleconference and reach consensus on comments submitted to TRRP:

- The SAB recommends a larger expert pool to review TRRP technical products with high levels of uncertainty
- Disagreement exists in the interpretation of scientific results and/or application of a new technical approach
- Scientific input will have a significant influence on TRRP implementation and the opinion of external subject matter experts is requested and/or desirable
- Uncertainty exists on the scientific findings of the TRRP work product

3 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Presented below are the roles and responsibilities associated with the implementation of TRRP peer reviews.

A. Executive Director

- a) Determine priorities for peer review in keeping with the guidelines above
- b) Confer with SAB to identify the need for peer review for particular products
- c) Determine the level of peer review required and identify approach
- d) Develop budgets for peer review for approval by the Trinity River Management Council (TMC)

B. Science Coordinator/Implementation Branch Chief

- a) Administer budget for peer reviews
- b) Maintain a list of qualified experts provided by the SAB in a number of technical topic areas relevant to TRRP implementation
- c) Select appropriate reviewers for both internal and external reviews (simple) based on availability
- d) Handle correspondence with the External Review Facilitator for external reviews with panel
- e) Develop scopes of work that provide context for the reviewers (e.g., specific need for peer review, the objectives to be addressed by the work, the relationship to other efforts)
- f) Ensure author(s) is responsive to comments and document those responses to Program satisfaction
- g) Receive internal and external (simple) review comments and organize for submittal to author(s)
- h) Coordinate revision of work product, if needed
- i) Ensure the review process works in a timely and efficient manner
- j) Upon completion of a review:
 - i) Prepare a package that includes all reviews and any relevant material
 - ii) Maintain a file of peer reviews for each document
 - iii) Provide a summary for the Executive Director
- k) Post results of peer review for public access as appropriate

C. External Review Facilitator

- a) Select appropriate reviewers to serve on peer review panels for the subject matter to be reviewed
- b) Contract with reviewers
- c) Provide reviewer input with summary report to the Program
- d) Coordinate/prepare summary report if peer review panel has been assembled
- e) Confer with SAB on outcomes of review

D. Reviewers

- a) Conduct independent peer reviews as described in Instructions to Reviewers (Appendix A).
- b) Send reviews to the Science Coordinator/Implementation Branch Chief if internal or external (simple) review or provide input to the External Review Facilitator if an expert panel is assembled

E. Work Product Author(s)

- a) Carefully consider and completely address each comment from all reviewers
- b) Respond to each specific comment with sufficient detail to address the concern in the comment-response table
- c) Indicate how the document was updated for each item in "b"
- d) Document reasoning if a review comment is not addressed

F. Scientific Advisory Board

- a) Refer TRRP products to external reviewers as deemed necessary
- b) Suggest reviewers, as requested
- c) Periodically evaluate the overall review process
- d) Determine relevance of reviewer results in relation to Program requirements

G. Work Group Coordinators

- a) Coordinate with Executive Director when a work group product is drafted to initiate peer review process
- b) Upon request, facilitate internal peer reviews and assist with refereeing comments submitted to authors
- c) Serve as internal reviewers upon request
- d) Refer technical issues to the Executive Director for scheduling of SAB or external peer review

4 PEER REVIEW PROCESS

This section describes the steps to be taken once the Executive Director has made a decision to forward a product to the SAB to conduct or oversee a peer review, and to determine the appropriate level of review. Some steps are specific to external reviews; these are distinguished in the sections below.

4.1 Select External Review Facilitator

When an external peer review requires convening a panel of experts, the Executive Director will authorize the contracting of support services from a qualified independent science neutral facilitator. The facilitator should have prior experience convening restoration-related peer reviews and may be drawn from academia and/or the environmental consulting industry.

4.2 Prepare Scope of Work

OMB (2004) advises the charge to the reviewers be determined in advance of their selection. The charge should be targeted to specific technical questions, developed in consultation with the SAB, while also soliciting a broad evaluation of the overall product. Reviewers should not be requested to provide advice on policy, which is the purview of the government. Finally, the scope of the charge to panel members should ask reviewers to ensure all scientific uncertainties are clearly identified and characterized, as well as their potential implications for the technical conclusions (OMB 2004).

The Science Coordinator/Implementation Branch Chief is responsible for preparing the scope of work for the review. A set of instructions to reviewers (Appendix A) provides general guidance applicable to all peer reviews. The Science Coordinator/Implementation Branch Chief will supplement these instructions with information specific to the work product under review (e.g., specific need for peer review, the objectives to be addressed by the work, the relationship to other efforts, schedule).

Finally, the most critical element of the scope of work is the set of questions to be addressed by the reviewers, which are developed by the Science Coordinator/Implementation Branch Chief with input from other TRRP staff as required. For both internal and external reviews, the generic questions listed in Section B of Appendix A will serve as a guide. The questions to be addressed will be finalized by the External Review Facilitator with approval from the Executive Director and SAB when external peer review panels are convened.

4.3 Recruit Reviewers

Internal reviewers will be recruited from TRRP partner agency staff associated with the Program by the Science Coordinator/Implementation Branch Chief. External reviewers will be selected from a diversity of institutions, including universities, state, federal, tribal, local government, private and non-governmental organizations, while avoiding, when possible, members of the same institution or agency as the author(s). The Science Coordinator/Implementation Branch Chief (or External Review Facilitator for external review panels) is responsible for maintaining a list of potential external reviewers and selecting appropriate individuals according to the subject matter of the work product to be reviewed.

The following criteria for reviewer selection are based on OMB (2004) guidelines:

- A. Expertise – According to the OMB (2004), the most important selection factor is expertise. Reviewers should represent the necessary spectrum of knowledge to provide a comprehensive review of the work product.

- B. Balance – Maintain a diversity of scientific perspectives relevant to the subject by inviting reviewers with competing views may lead to a sharper, more focused peer review.
- C. Independence – For TRRP internal reviews, reviewers may be employed by the same agency or work in the same office as the author(s), but should not be involved in producing the draft work product. For external reviews, the reviewers may be recruited from state or federal agencies that are TRRP partners, in addition to academia and other natural resource entities, but should not be involved with the Program.
- D. Conflict of Interest – No conflict of interest for or against the work product or its authors based on financial interest in the product or author(s), familial relationship with the author(s), personal bias for or against the institution or author(s), professional connection to the institution or author(s), organizational affiliation, or potential to be influenced by lobbying or other political pressure to produce a certain result or more work in the area of this product. OMB (2004) requires adoption or adaption of the National Academies of Science selection policies when selecting peer reviewers who are not government employees (Appendix B); government employees are subject to federal ethics requirements.
- E. Availability – Reviewers must be able to complete a technical review in a reasonable time or the time identified.

For assemblage of external review panels, the External Review Facilitator will review candidate resumes/curricula vitae to verify expertise. Candidates should also be interviewed to ascertain their perspectives on the subject matter and determine their level of independence, any potential conflicts of interest and availability. Reviewers should also complete the Conflict of Interest disclosure included as Appendix B.

4.4 Disseminate Draft Work Product for Review

The draft work product, along with the scope of work and comment table (Appendix C), will be disseminated by the Science Coordinator/Implementation Branch Chief for internal and external (simple) reviews, to the SAB, or the External Review Facilitator that has responsibility for disseminating material to expert review panels under their oversight. OMB (2004) advises that the following disclaimer be added to draft work products prior to dissemination:

“THIS INFORMATION IS DISTRIBUTED SOLELY FOR THE PURPOSE OF PRE-DISSEMINATION PEER REVIEW UNDER APPLICABLE INFORMATION QUALITY GUIDELINES. IT HAS NOT BEEN FORMALLY DISSEMINATED BY [THE AGENCY]. IT DOES NOT REPRESENT AND SHOULD NOT BE CONSTRUED TO REPRESENT ANY AGENCY DETERMINATION OR POLICY.”

4.5 Document and Submit Review Comments

In most cases reviewers will conduct their reviews independently of one another, and document their comments individually using an electronic comment table provided by the Program (Appendix C). The comment table is organized to allow grouping of comments by type and easy identification of the specific page and line numbers being referenced. Once complete, each

reviewer will submit their individual comment table to the Science Coordinator/Implementation Branch Chief (internal and external [simple] reviews) or the External Review Facilitator (external review panels).

External review panel meetings are conducted in person or via webinar and/or teleconference and are facilitated by the External Review Facilitator. The External Review Facilitator then prepares a summary report documenting the collective comments of the panel, which may or may not include individual comments prepared by the panel members as appendices.

4.6 Comment Management

As comments are received from reviewers, they will be organized by the Science Coordinator/Implementation Branch Chief into a comment-response table for ease of response by the document author(s). Duplicate comments will be noted and arranged so the author(s) are required to only respond a single time. The Executive Director and Science Coordinator/Implementation Branch Chief will review the comment-response table to verify all comments are appropriate for submittal to author(s). Comments must address the original purpose of the document under review and should not stray into other possible lines of research not directly related to the original purpose. If required, the SAB may be called upon to assess the technical accuracy and reasonableness of specific comments. The Science Coordinator/Implementation Branch Chief will submit individual review comment forms and the comment-response table to author(s) for response. For external review panels, the Executive Director and Science Coordinator/Implementation Branch Chief will put the reviewer comments from the summary report prepared by the External Review Facilitator into a comment-response table and submit the report and table to the author(s) for response.

Authors will respond to all review comments and document how the work product was modified. If the author(s) disagree with a review comment and decide not to modify the work product, the justification for this decision will be documented in the comment-response table. Should the author(s) require clarification on specific comments, the Science Coordinator/Implementation Branch Chief will arrange for a discussion between the author(s) and reviewer.

4.7 Comment Resolution

All reviewer comments should be given consideration and be incorporated where relevant and valid (OMB 2004). Author(s) should address all comments and modify the draft work product as required. When multiple authors are involved, comments should be divided by discipline and assigned to those who served as principal authors. In many cases a meeting may be required to obtain consensus among authors on the appropriate response. Some comments will be more difficult to address than others and some may require substantial resources. These comments should be brought to the attention of the Executive Director for a determination of the level of resources that can be applied.

4.8 Final Review and Approval

The author(s) submit the revised work product and comment-response table to the Science Coordinator/Implementation Branch Chief. The Science Coordinator/Implementation Branch Chief reviews the revised work product and responses to determine whether comments were adequately addressed, then prepares a package of all relevant peer review materials for the Executive Director. The Executive Director ensures all required reviews were performed, validates the adequacy of the responses and identifies any needed revisions. The Executive Director then notifies the author(s) of any further revisions. The author(s) make any final revisions and submit a final work product to the Science Coordinator/Implementation Branch Chief and Executive Director, who approve the work product for release (Appendix D).

5 PEER REVIEW PUBLICATION

The results of external review panels should be posted on the TRRP website for public access and to inform all stakeholders and preserve transparency of the Program. Disclosure of reviewer identity is required, but not public attribution of specific comments to specific reviewers (OMB 2004).

6 LITERATURE CITED

Office of Management and Budget [OMB]. 2004. Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/memoranda/fy2005/m05-03.pdf>

APPENDIX A

**TRINITY RIVER RESTORATION PROGRAM
INSTRUCTIONS TO PEER REVIEWERS**

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TRINITY RIVER RESTORATION PROGRAM INSTRUCTIONS TO PEER REVIEWERS

Thank you for agreeing to review this product. The following is a summary of expectations for peer review and the topics to be addressed by each peer reviewer.

A. INDEPENDENCE OF A PEER REVIEW

Peer review must provide an unbiased opinion of the scientific quality of a product (i.e., proposal, report, data, map) by individuals who are independent from the authors and external to them and their local or regional institution. A review must be independent of various types of conflicts of interest with the author(s) and with the product under review. The Trinity River Restoration Program (TRRP or Program) places considerable reliance on the objectivity, integrity, and professionalism of each peer reviewer to provide technical opinion of each product without bias or conflict of interest.

Please review each statement about potential bias or independence. Your peer review will be anonymous to the Program. Your review will be held in the file for the Program as documentation of the peer review process for this product.

Your considerations should include the following factors that could lead to bias or conflict of interest:

- financial interest in the product or the author(s);
- familial relationship with the author(s);
- bias, for personal reasons, for or against the author(s) or institutions of this product;
- professional connection (i.e., current or former: student or advisor, supervisor or supervised, employer) to the author(s) or the institution of this product;
- organizational affiliation (i.e., same agency, department, organization, business); or
- impacts of lobbying or political pressure exerted by persons looking for a particular result or more work in the area of this product;

IF YOU FEEL THAT YOU CANNOT PROVIDE AN UNBIASED REVIEW, PLEASE DO NOT REVIEW THIS PRODUCT AND IMMEDIATELY RETURN THE DOCUMENT TO THE PROGRAM'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.

B. PROPOSAL, PROTOCOL, AND STUDY PLAN REVIEW GUIDELINES

Confidentiality

The enclosed product is a privileged communication. Please do not show it to anyone or discuss it, except to solicit assistance with a technical point. Your review and your recommendation should also be considered confidential.

Conflicts of Interest

Please review the "Independence of a Peer Review". If you feel that you might have difficulty writing an objective review, please return this material immediately, without reviewing it. If your previous or present connection with the author(s) or their institution(s) might be construed as creating a conflict of interest, but no actual conflict exists, this should be described in your Conflict of Interest Disclosure.

Trinity River Restoration Program Proposal, Protocol, and Study Plan Review

Reviewer Instructions

In your review, please address the criteria below. Support your comments with specific evidence from the text. Include any additional materials, such as the marked-up copy of the document and additional comments. Do not include routine editing in your review with the exception of critical or sensitive areas where technical meaning is an issue.

Title: _____

Overall Rating: (Superior, Above average, Sufficient, or Inadequate)

Basis: Please thoroughly explain your review based on the criteria below.

Project Purpose

- Are the goals, objectives, hypotheses, and questions clearly stated and internally consistent?
- Is the idea timely and important? Is the study justified relative to existing knowledge?
- Are results likely to add to the base of knowledge?

Background

- Is a conceptual model clearly stated in the Investigation Plan and does it explain the underlying basis for the proposed work?
- Is other information needed to understand the basis for the proposed work related to Program objectives included and well documented?

Approach

- Is the approach well designed and appropriate for meeting the objectives of the project?
- Is this a cost effective approach to meeting objectives?

Feasibility

- Is the approach fully documented and technically feasible?
- What is the likelihood of success?
- Is the scale of the project consistent with the objectives and within the abilities of the authors?

Relevance to Program

- Does the Investigation Plan possess characteristics such as integration, with Program management approaches, syntheses, and use of existing information, collaborations, or multiple disciplines?
- Will the information ultimately be useful to inform Program management actions?

Overall Evaluation Summary Rating

- A brief explanation of the summary rating.

C. REPORT REVIEW GUIDELINES

Confidentiality

The enclosed manuscript is a privileged communication. Please do not show it to anyone or discuss it, except to solicit assistance with a technical point. Your review and your recommendation should also be considered confidential.

Conflicts of Interest

Please review the "Independence of a Peer Review" above. If you feel you might have any difficulty writing an objective review, please return the manuscript immediately, un-reviewed. If your previous or present connection with the author(s) or an author's institution might be construed as creating a conflict of interest or of financial benefit, but no actual conflict exists, this should be described in your Conflict of Interest Disclosure.

Trinity River Restoration Program Review Form

Reviewer Instructions

In your review, please address the general review questions below. Support your comments with specific evidence from the text. Include any additional materials, such as the marked-up copy of the report and additional comments. Do not include routine editing in your review with the exception of critical or sensitive areas where technical meaning is an issue.

Report Title: _____

Rating: Approve Approve with minor changes Approve with major changes Reject

General Review Questions:

1. **Title.** Does the title accurately convey the contents?
2. **Abstract.** Does the abstract describe the importance of the report to the Trinity River Restoration Program? Does the abstract provide an accurate overview of the report and summarize major accomplishments?
3. **Introduction.** Are the rationale and objectives for this work clear? Does the Introduction establish a need for the report by highlighting information gaps or technical or scientific disagreements in the literature? Has the problem been clearly identified?
4. **Study Area.** Is there enough information to understand the setting of the study and why it was selected?
5. **Methods.** Are data collection methods described adequately? Is the sampling strategy explained? Are data analysis methods specifically identified and appropriate to the data?
6. **Uncertainty.** Has uncertainty been quantified appropriately?

7. **Results.** Are the findings adequately and accurately described? Are results clearly summarized? Are tables, figures and appendices used effectively? Are they well organized? Are there any ambiguities? Are the analyses appropriate to meet objectives and applied appropriately?
8. **Discussion.** Has the author adequately considered alternative explanations or hypotheses for the results found? Are the conclusions justified and consistent with the objectives and supported by the analysis? Do they follow logically from the text? Are recommendations appropriate?
9. **Implications.** Did the report highlight the significance of the work to the Trinity River Restoration Program? If appropriate, did the report adequately integrate biological and physical information to characterize the problem, assess the approach used, and identify further gaps in understanding? Do the results and recommendations have a clear tie to evaluating or improving management actions?
10. **References.** Is material in the text cited when necessary? Is each citation in the report listed in the References Cited, and vice versa? Are all citations pertinent?
11. Did the report address the tasks/information needs identified in the investigation plan? If no, does the author explain why the task was not completed or information is missing.
12. **Justification.** Please provide a justification for your rating, citing specific comments to justify reductions in the overall rating.

Other comments

Are figure legends, captions, and table headings clear and helpful? Is jargon avoided?

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APPENDIX B

**NATIONAL ACADEMIES OF SCIENCE
CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE FORM**

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BI/COI FORM 2

THE NATIONAL ACADEMIES
Advisers to the Nation on Science, Engineering, and Medicine

National Academy of Sciences
National Academy of Engineering
Institute of Medicine
National Research Council

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION
AND
CONFIDENTIAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE**
For Studies Involving Program Reviews and Evaluations

NAME: _____ TELEPHONE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

CURRENT EMPLOYER: _____

NAS/NAE/IOM/NRC COMMITTEE: _____

There are two parts to this form, Part I Background Information, and Part II Confidential Conflict of Interest Disclosure. Complete both parts, **sign** and **date** this form on the last page, and return the form to the responsible staff officer for *The National Academies* project and committee activity to which this form applies. **Retain a copy for your records.**

PART I BACKGROUND INFORMATION

INSTRUCTIONS

Please provide the information requested below regarding **relevant** organizational affiliations, government service, public statements and positions, research support, and additional information (if any). Information is "relevant" if it is related to -- and might

reasonably be of interest to others concerning -- your knowledge, experience, and personal perspectives regarding the subject matter and issues to be addressed by the committee activity for which this form is being prepared. If some or all of the requested information is contained in your curriculum vitae, you may if you prefer simply attach your CV to this form, supplemented by additional responses or comments below as necessary.

I. ORGANIZATIONAL AFFILIATIONS. Report your relevant business relationships (as an employee, owner, officer, director, consultant, etc.) and your relevant remunerated or volunteer non-business relationships (e.g., professional organizations, trade associations, public interest or civic groups, etc.).

II. GOVERNMENT SERVICE. Report your relevant service (full-time or part-time) with federal, state, or local government in the United States (including elected or appointed positions, employment, advisory board memberships, military service, etc.).

III. RESEARCH SUPPORT. Report relevant information regarding both public and private sources of research support (other than your present employer), including sources of funding, equipment, facilities, etc.

IV. PUBLIC STATEMENTS AND POSITIONS. List your relevant articles, testimony, speeches, etc., by date, title, and publication (if any) in which they appeared, or provide relevant representative examples if numerous. Provide a brief description of relevant positions of any organizations or groups with which you are closely identified or associated.

V. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION. If there are relevant aspects of your background or present circumstances not addressed above that might reasonably be construed by others as affecting your judgment in matters within the assigned task of the committee or panel on which you have been invited to serve, and therefore might constitute an actual or potential source of bias, please describe them briefly.

PART II CONFIDENTIAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE

INSTRUCTIONS

It is essential that the work of committees of the institution used in the development of reports not be compromised by any significant conflict of interest. For this purpose, **the term "conflict of interest" means any financial or other interest which conflicts with the service of the individual because it (1) could significantly impair the individual's objectivity or (2) could create an unfair competitive advantage for any person or organization.** Except for those situations in which the institution determines that a conflict of interest is unavoidable and promptly and publicly discloses the conflict of interest, no individual can be appointed to serve (or continue to serve) on a committee of the institution used in the development of reports if the individual has a conflict of interest that is relevant to the functions to be performed.

The term "conflict of interest" means something more than individual bias. There must be an *interest*, ordinarily financial, that could be directly affected by the work of the committee.

Conflict of interest requirements are *objective* and *prophylactic*. They are not an assessment of one's actual behavior or character, one's ability to act objectively despite the conflicting interest, or one's relative insensitivity to particular dollar amounts of specific assets because of one's personal wealth. Conflict of interest requirements are objective standards designed to eliminate certain specific, potentially compromising situations from arising, and thereby to protect the individual, the other members of the committee, the institution, and the public interest. The individual, the committee, and the institution should not be placed in a situation where others could reasonably question, and perhaps discount or dismiss, the work of the committee simply because of the existence of conflicting interests.

The term "conflict of interest" applies only to *current interests*. It does not apply to past interests that have expired, no longer exist, and cannot reasonably affect current behavior. Nor does it apply to possible interests that may arise in the future but do not currently exist, because such future interests are inherently speculative and uncertain. For example, a pending formal or informal application for a particular job is a current interest, but the mere possibility that one might apply for such a job in the future is not a current interest.

The term "conflict of interest" applies not only to the personal interests of the individual but also to the *interests of others* with whom the individual has substantial common financial interests if these interests are relevant to the functions to be performed. Thus, in assessing an individual's potential conflicts of interest, consideration must be given not only to the interests of the individual but also to the interests of the individual's spouse and minor children, the individual's employer, the individual's business partners, and others with whom the individual has substantial common financial interests. Consideration must also be given to the interests of those for whom one is acting in a

fiduciary or similar capacity (e.g., being an officer or director of a corporation, whether profit or nonprofit, or serving as a trustee).

The institution is frequently called upon by sponsors to provide an independent review and evaluation of a particular program or programs of the sponsor. For any committee that will be used by the institution in the development of one or more reports to be provided by the institution to a sponsoring agency for use as an independent review and evaluation of one or more programs of the sponsor, *the focus of the conflict of interest inquiry is on the identification and assessment of relationships to the program or programs to be reviewed and evaluated, as well as on other interests that might be directly affected by the review and evaluation.*

For example, if the institution were conducting an independent review and evaluation of a particular research program of a sponsor, the focus of the conflict of interest inquiry would be on the identification and assessment of existing interests in that program that could be directly affected if the institution's report were to provide the basis for action or inaction with respect to changes in the program. The concern is that if an individual (or others with whom the individual has substantial common financial interests) has interests that could be directly affected by the review and evaluation process, the individual's objectivity while participating in the review and evaluation process could be impaired.

Such interests could include existing research grants or contracts under the program being reviewed and evaluated held by the individual (or others with whom the individual has substantial common financial interests) if, for example, the grants or contracts might be modified or terminated, or if there is a reasonable expectation of continuing research funding that could be lost. Other interests that might be directly affected might include, for example, one's employment and the interests of one's employer, one's self-employment and the interests of one's clients, interests in partnerships and commercial ventures arising out of or related to the research, interests in relevant patents and other forms of intellectual property related to the research, and interests in various forms of substantial non-financial research support.

Certain relationships to the sponsor may also raise issues of conflict of interest. For example, serving as a consultant to the sponsor could constitute the basis for a conflict of interest if the consulting relationship could be directly affected or is directly related to the subject matter of the review and evaluation.

The questions set forth below are designed to elicit information from you concerning possible conflicts of interest that are relevant to the functions to be performed by the particular committee on which you have been invited to serve.

1. RELATIONSHIPS TO THE PROGRAM (S) BEING EVALUATED. Taking into account your interests and the interests of other individuals with whom you share substantial common financial interests (e.g., spouse, close research colleagues and collaborators, business partners, etc.) --

(a) Do you or such others receive current *financial support* (e.g., research and/or development grants or contracts, procurement contracts, consulting contracts, other grant support, etc.) from the program(s) being evaluated that could be directly affected by the committee's report (e.g., possible termination of current agreements or loss of reasonably anticipated future funding)?

(b) Do you or such others receive substantial current *non-financial support* (e.g., equipment, facilities, industry partnerships, research assistants and other research personnel, etc.), from the program(s) being evaluated that could be directly affected by the committee's report?

(c) Do you or such others have *any other current financial interest* (e.g., patent rights, interests in partnerships and commercial ventures, etc.) obtained from or through the program(s) being evaluated that could be directly affected by the committee's report?

If the answer to all of the above questions under RELATIONSHIPS TO THE PROGRAM(S) BEING EVALUATED is either "no" or "not applicable," check here _____ (NO).

If the answer to any of the above questions under RELATIONSHIPS TO THE PROGRAM(S) BEING EVALUATED is "yes," check here ____ (YES), and briefly describe the circumstances on the last page of this form.

2. INVESTMENT INTERESTS. Taking into account stocks, bonds, and other financial instruments and investments including partnerships (but excluding broadly diversified mutual funds and any investment or financial interest valued at less than \$10,000), if the reports resulting from this committee activity were to provide the basis for action or inaction with respect to changes in the program(s) being reviewed and evaluated --

(a) Do you or your spouse or minor children own directly or indirectly (e.g., through a trust or an individual account in a pension or profit-sharing plan) any stocks, bonds or other financial instruments or investments that could be affected, either directly or by a direct effect on the business enterprise or activities underlying the investments?

(b) Do you have any other financial investments or interests such as commercial business interests (e.g., sole proprietorships), investment interests (e.g., stock options), or investment relationships (e.g., involving parents or grandchildren) that could be affected, either directly or by a direct effect on the business enterprise or activities underlying the investments?

If the answer to all of the above questions under INVESTMENT INTERESTS is either "no" or "not applicable," check here _____ (NO).

If the answer to any of the above questions under INVESTMENT INTERESTS is "yes," check here ____ (YES), and briefly describe the circumstances on the last page of this form.

3. PROPERTY INTERESTS. Taking into account real estate and other tangible property interests, as well as intellectual property (patents, copyrights, etc.) interests, if the reports resulting from this committee activity were to provide the basis for action or inaction with respect to changes in the program(s) being reviewed and evaluated --

(a) Do you or your spouse or minor children own directly or indirectly any such property interests that could be directly affected?

(b) To the best of your knowledge, do any others with whom you have substantial common financial interests (e.g., employer, business partners, relatives) own directly or indirectly any such property interests that could be directly affected?

If the answer to all of the above questions under PROPERTY INTERESTS is either "no" or "not applicable," check here ____ (NO).

If the answer to any of the above questions under PROPERTY INTERESTS is "yes," check here ____ (YES), and briefly describe the circumstances on the last page of this form.

4. OTHER INTERESTS. (a) If the reports resulting from this committee activity were to recommend changes in the program(s) being evaluated --

(i) If you are employed or self-employed (or your spouse is employed or self-employed), could your current employment or self-employment (or your spouse's current employment or self-employment) be directly affected?

(ii) To the best of your knowledge, could any significant financial interests of your (or your spouse's) employer or, if self-employed, your (or your spouse's) significant clients and/or business partners be directly affected?

(iii) If you are an officer, director or trustee of any corporation or other legal entity, could the financial interests of that corporation or legal entity be directly affected?

(iv) If you are a consultant (whether full-time or part-time), could there be a direct effect on any of your current consulting relationships?

(b) Do you have a consulting relationship with a sponsor, grantee, or contractor of the program being reviewed and evaluated that is directly related to the subject matter of the program review and evaluation for which this disclosure form is being prepared (e.g., a consulting relationship to provide assistance to the sponsor, grantee, or contractor with respect to the program review and evaluation)?

(c) Is a central purpose of the program review and evaluation a critical review and evaluation of your own work or that of your employer?

(d) Are you an official or employee of an agency or organization, which is a sponsor of the program that is being reviewed and evaluated and/or a sponsor of this program review and evaluation committee activity?

(e) Do you have any existing professional obligations (e.g., as an officer of a scientific or engineering society) that effectively require you to publicly defend a previously established position on an issue that is relevant to the functions to be performed in this committee activity?

(f) To the best of your knowledge, will your participation in this committee activity enable you to obtain access to a competitor's or potential competitor's confidential proprietary information?

(g) If you are or have ever been a U.S. Government employee (either civilian or military), to the best of your knowledge are there any federal conflict of interest restrictions that may be applicable to your service in connection with this committee activity?

(h) Could your service on the committee on which you have been invited to serve create a specific financial or commercial competitive advantage for you or others with whom you have substantial common financial interests?

(i) If the committee activity for which this form is being prepared involves reviews of specific applications and proposals for contract, grant, fellowship, etc. awards to be made by sponsors, do you or others with whom you have substantial common financial interests, or a familial or substantial professional relationship, have an interest in receiving or being considered for awards that are currently the subject of the review being conducted by this committee?

(j) If the committee activity for which this form is being prepared involves developing requests for proposals, work statements, and/or specifications, etc., are you interested in seeking an award under the program for which the committee on which you have been invited to serve is developing the request for proposals, work statement, and/or specifications -- or, are you employed in any capacity by, or do you have a financial interest in or other economic relationship with, any person or organization that to the best of your knowledge is interested in seeking an award under this program?

If the answer to all of the above questions under OTHER INTERESTS is either "no" or "not applicable," check here _____ (NO).

If the answer to any of the above questions under OTHER INTERESTS is "yes," check here ____ (YES), and briefly describe the circumstances below.

EXPLANATION OF "YES" RESPONSES:

During your period of service in connection with the activity for which this form is being completed, any changes in the information reported, or any new information, which needs to be reported, should be reported promptly by written or electronic communication to the responsible staff officer.

YOUR SIGNATURE

DATE

Reviewed by: _____
Executive Director

Date

APPENDIX C

**TRINITY RIVER RESTORATION PROGRAM PEER REVIEW
COMMENT-RESPONSE TABLE**

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APPENDIX D

**EXAMPLE TRINITY RIVER RESTORATION PROGRAM
PEER REVIEW RELEASE FORM**

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Title: Rearing Habitat Assessment of Sawmill Rehabilitation Site Upper Trinity River, 2010

Authors: Aaron Martin, Damon H. Goodman, and Justin Alvarez

Reviews: Six reviews were provided by Trinity River Restoration Program (TRRP) staff:

1. DJ Bandrowski, Bureau of Reclamation
2. Brandt Gutermuth, Bureau of Reclamation
3. Nina Hemphill, Bureau of Reclamation
4. Seth Naman, NOAA Fisheries
5. Robin Schrock, Bureau of Reclamation
6. Eric Wiseman, USFS

The field and analytical methods in *Rearing Habitat Assessment of Sawmill Rehabilitation Site Upper Trinity River, 2010* are consistent with those reported in *Integrated Habitat Assessment of the Upper Trinity River, 2009*. Three external reviews of the rearing habitat assessment included in that report were supplied by the Project Review Office, Bay-Delta Ecosystem Restoration Program, UC Davis Dept. of Land, Air and Water Resources.

Comment response: Authors provided a comment / response table plus an updated report on April 10, 2012.

Findings:

The TRRP Science Program Coordinator reviewed the comment / response table and updated report and considers the response to peer review adequate.

Signature

Date

The TRRP Executive Director finds that all required reviews were performed and validates the adequacy of the response to peer review comments.

Signature

Date

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