

Peer Review Plan for the Proposed Delisting of Gray Wolf (*Canis lupus*)

The purpose of this peer review is to help the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) ensure that we have used the best scientific and commercial information available when we make our final decision as to the current status of the gray wolf. Thus, we are looking for independent scientific perspectives on the comprehensiveness and logic of the following documents, as well as how well the technical conclusions are supported by the data and analyses.

About the Documents

- 1. Title:** Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Removing the Gray Wolf (*Canis lupus*) from the List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife
Description: This document announces the Service's proposal to remove the gray wolf (*Canis lupus*) from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife on the basis of recovery.
- 2. Title:** Gray Wolf Biological Report
Description: This report provides a concise overview of the changes in the biological status (range, distribution, abundance) of the gray wolf (*Canis lupus*) in the lower 48 United States over the last several decades.

Estimated Dissemination Date of the Documents: March 2019

Estimated Peer Review Timeframe: March 2019 – May 2019

About the Peer Review Process

Type of Peer Review: Influential.

An outside third party has been contracted to manage the peer review process, inclusive of identifying qualified peer reviewers. Reviewers will prepare individual written responses. The role of the Service is limited to framing the scope of the peer review for the contractor and ensuring that the contractor follows Service procedures, while remaining completely removed from the process of selecting the peer reviewers or coordinating the peer review process.

The Contractor will ensure the peer review process complies with the Service's July 1, 1994 peer review policy (59 FR 34270), the Service's August 22, 2016 Director's Memo on the Peer Review Process, and the Office of Management and Budget's December 16, 2004 Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review.

The scientific peer review will run concurrently with public review.

Number of Reviewers: Peer review will be requested from five independent experts.

Selection of Reviewers: The contractor is responsible for selecting reviewers and obtaining the individual written peer reviews from five well-qualified reviewers. Each reviewer shall complete and submit a conflict of interest form. The selection and vetting of peer reviewers will occur completely outside the influence of the Service. Peer Reviewers will be advised that

their reviews, including their names and affiliations, will (1) be included in our administrative record, and (2) will be made available to the public upon completion of the review.

As this peer review is being managed by an independent contractor, the Service is not asking the public or scientific or professional societies to nominate potential peer reviewers.

Reviewer Expertise: The Contractor will select peer reviewers based on expertise, with due consideration of independence and conflict of interest (OMB –IQ bulletin for Peer Review). While expertise is the primary consideration, reviewers should also be selected to represent a diversity of scientific perspectives relevant to the subject.

1. Each reviewer must have a Ph.D. or an M.S. with significant experience in Wildlife Biology, Ecology, or Wildlife Management; and
2. In combination, the expertise of qualified reviewers shall include the following, however, each individual is not required to meet all qualifications:
 - a. Demonstrated experience or expertise with large carnivore management, especially wolves.
 - b. Expert knowledge of conservation biology, wildlife management, demographic management of mammals (especially carnivores), genetics, population modeling, and/or scientific literature on wolves or other carnivores.
 - c. Expert knowledge of mammalian taxonomy/systematics.
 - d. Experience as a peer reviewer for scientific publications.

Estimated start date of peer review: March 2019.

About Public Participation

The public is invited to submit comments on this planned peer review process. Comments on this peer review plan should be sent to: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ecological Services, Attn: Gray Wolf Peer Review, 5275 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, VA 22041-3803 or by email to don_morgan@fws.gov. We will announce opportunity for a public review of the proposal in the Federal Register.

Contact:

For more information, contact Don Morgan, Chief, Branch of Delisting and Foreign Species, Ecological Services Office, don_morgan@fws.gov or (703) 358-2444.