

Peer Review Plan for the Species Status Assessment for the Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake

About the Document

Title: Species Status Assessment for the Eastern Massasauga Rattlesnake (*Sistrurus catenatus*)

Purpose: The Species Status Assessment (SSA) report will inform the determination by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) as to whether the eastern massasauga rattlesnake warrants listing as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended.

Estimated Dissemination Date of SSA Report: September 2015

About the Peer Review Process

Estimated Timing of Peer Review: April 2015

Type of Peer Review: The Service will solicit comments from independent scientific reviewers who will submit individual comments in written form.

Anticipated Number of Reviewers: The Service will request review by at least three but not more than ten independent subject matter experts.

Reviewer Selection Method: The peer reviewers will be selected by the Service. In selecting peer reviewers, we will consider four key factors: expertise, balance, independence, and avoidance of conflict of interest. We will avoid using individuals who have already expressed strong support or opposition to the action, individuals who have been previously paid by the Service and individuals who are likely to experience personal gain or loss (e.g., financial, prestige) as a result of the Service's decision. We will avoid using Service employees except in cases where an employee possesses unique expertise that is key to the review. We will not seek nominations for peer reviewers from the public.

Necessary Expertise: Peer reviewers should have knowledge of eastern massasauga biology, reptile ecology, or conservation biology. Peer reviewers will be advised that they are not to provide advice on policy.

About Public Participation

Peer review comments will be publicly available. If we determine that the species warrants listing, we will publish a proposed rule to list the species, with appropriate opportunities for public review and comment. The public is invited to submit comments on this peer review plan by contacting the agency person listed below.

Contact

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