

About the Document

Titles: Proposal to delist the Lake Erie Watersnake, Proposal to designate critical habitat for the Tumbling Creek cavesnail.

Description of Documents: Region 3, Endangered Species Program Peer Review Plan for: listings, reclassifications (up-listings or down-listings), delistings, critical habitat designations, recovery plans, qualifying 5-year reviews, post-delisting monitoring plans, and 12-month petition findings.

Estimated Dissemination Date: December 2009-May 2010

About the Peer Review Process

Type of Peer Review: The Service will solicit comments from independent scientific reviewers who will submit individual comments in written form. The scientific peer review may run concurrently with public review.

Anticipated Number of Reviewers: We anticipate receipt of reviews from a minimum of three peer reviewers.

Reviewer Selection Method/Expertise of Reviewers: We will solicit reviews from objective and, preferably, well known and widely respected experts who are willing to commit to providing an objective review within the needed time frame. Reviewers will be selected from specialists in the relevant taxonomic group as well as experts in conservation or population biology and threats to the species. We will try to 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 (financial, prestige, etc.) 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.

The Service will provide each peer reviewer with information explaining their role and instructions for fulfilling that role, including Regional and Service guidance and the draft document or proposed rule. Deadline for receipt of reviews will be clearly stated.

Handling of Peer Review Comments: All peer reviews and comments will be public documents. If a peer reviewer does not want his/her name to appear in the final decision document he/she must inform us of this early in the review process.

Peer review comments will be incorporated or addressed, as appropriate, in the final decision document.

Estimated Start Date of Peer Review: December 2009-July 2010

About Public Participation

The public is asked to provide comments on this planned peer review process. Comments must be received by October 20, 2009. Comments on this peer review plan should be sent to: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ecological Services, Attn: Peer Review, 1 Federal Drive, Fort Snelling, Minnesota 55111. Comments on this plan may also be submitted by electronic mail to <espeerreview_r3@fws.gov>. The subject line should read "Proposal to list the Ozark hellbender Peer Review Plan Comments", or "Proposal to list the rayed bean and snuffbox Peer Review Plan Comments", or "Proposal to list the sheepsnose and spectaclecase Peer Review Plan Comments".

We will announce opportunity for a separate public review of the proposal/draft document in the Federal Register.

Contact

For more information, contact Region 3 Ecological Services at (612) 713-5350