

Peer Review Plan for the Proposed 4(d) Rule for the Northern Long-eared Bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*)

About the Document

The Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is proposing a rule under section 4d of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA). We are developing this proposed 4(d) rule to help determine what regulations are necessary and advisable for the conservation of the northern long-eared bat. The Service will consider results of the peer review to develop our final 4(d) rule, should our final determination be that northern long-eared bats should be listed as a threatened species.

Estimated Dissemination Date: 1/15/2015-2/30/2015

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: The Service will request review by a minimum of 3 independent expert 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. Expertise may include any one or combination of the following: knowledge/understanding of northern long-eared bat biology; knowledge/understanding of potential for any of the listed activities to impact the northern long-eared bat; knowledge/understanding of applicability of conservation measures; and knowledge/understanding of ESA compliance. 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 and will be made available to the public on regulations.gov. 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: 1/15/2015-2/30/2015

About Public Participation

The public is asked to provide comments on this planned peer review process. Comments must be received by January 30, 2015. Comments on this peer review plan should be sent to: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ecological Services, Attn: Peer Review, 5600 American Blvd. West, Suite 990, Bloomington, Minnesota 55437. Comments on this plan may also be submitted by electronic mail to <espeerreview_r3@fws.gov>. The subject line should read "Proposed 4(d) Rule for the Northern Long-eared Bat (*Myotis septentrionalis*)." We will announce opportunity for a public review of the proposal in the Federal Register.

Contact

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