Chowanoke Crayfish (Faxonius [Orconectes] virginiensis) Peer Review Plan

About the Document

By the end of fiscal year 2021, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) will make a listing determination for the Chowanoke crayfish (*Faxonius [Orconectes] virginiensis*). A listing determination means to prepare either a not warranted 12-month petition finding or a proposed rule to list the Chowanoke crayfish as a threatened or an endangered species. A proposed listing rule would also include a proposed designation of critical habitat, if prudent and determinable. If the Service proposes to list the Chowanoke crayfish, a final listing determination would follow within the statutory timelines.

About the Peer Review Process

Estimated Peer Review Timeline: January 2020 to March 2020

Process:

- Per our 1994 Peer Review policy, we will choose three or more independent peer reviewers and invite comment letters from the peer reviewers.
- Peer reviewers will be requested to review the Draft Species Status Assessment Report for the Chowanoke crayfish that supports our listing determination.
- Peer reviewers will not be asked to provide recommendations on the listing determination or
 designation of critical habitat. Peer reviewers will be asked to comment specifically on the
 quality of any information and analyses used or relied on in the document; identify
 oversights, omissions, and inconsistencies; provide advice on reasonableness of judgments
 made from the scientific evidence; ensure that scientific uncertainties are clearly identified
 and characterized, and that potential implications of uncertainties for the technical
 conclusions drawn are clear; and provide advice on the overall strengths and limitations of
 the scientific data used in the document.
- Peer reviewers will be asked to fill out a Conflict of Interest Form.

Peer reviewers will be selected based on the following criteria:

- Expertise: Reviewers will be experts in the ecology of Chowanoke crayfish, the stressors affecting this species, or applicable fields.
- Independence: As a rule, reviewers will not be employed by the Service, unless the Service staff is a leading expert in the ecology or stressors of the species, or an applicable field, and has not been involved in the report or proposed rule compilation. Academic and consulting scientists should have sufficient independence from the Service, as appropriate.
- Objectivity: Reviewers are expected to be objective, open-minded, and thoughtful.
- Advocacy: Reviewers will not be known or recognized for an affiliation with an advocacy position regarding the protection of this species.
- Conflict of Interest: Reviewers will not have any financial or other interest that conflicts with or that could impair their objectivity.

About Public Participation

- Our listing decision document will be made available to the public through the eRulemaking
 website, news releases, direct mailings, and posting on Service websites (with solicitations
 for public comment if we prepare a proposed rule to list the species as threatened or
 endangered). If appropriate, the Service will implement an outreach plan to provide ample
 opportunity for public involvement in the review process. If appropriate, the Service will
 publish a final listing and designation of critical habitat following consideration of all
 comments received from the public and peer reviewers.
- The Service will post a notice on its website of the final decision, which will include a summary of the results of the peer review process.
- This peer review plan is made available on this website to allow the public to monitor our compliance with the Office of Management and Budget's Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review.

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