

Eastern Puma Delisting Determination and Peer Review

About the Listing Decision

On January 23, 2018, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) published a final rule to delist the eastern puma (*Puma* (= *Felis*) *concolor cougar*) under the Endangered Species Act (Act) of 1973, as amended.

About the Peer Review Process

Peer Review Timeline: June 2017 to July 2017

Process:

- Per our 1994 Peer Review policy, we chose independent peer reviewers and invited comment letters from them.
- We solicited peer review from six knowledgeable individuals for their expertise in large carnivore ecology and management, with particular knowledge in one or more of the following areas: puma population ecology, management, demographics, conservation, and population genetics.
- In response to our request, we received comments from five experts.
- The peer reviewers were requested to review the proposed rule to delist the eastern puma due to extinction under the Act, originally published in the *Federal Register* on June 17, 2015, and re-proposed on June 28, 2016.
- Peer reviewers were asked: to comment specifically on the quality of information and analyses used or relied on in the Report; to identify oversights, omissions, and inconsistencies; to provide advice on reasonableness of judgments made from the scientific evidence; to ensure that scientific uncertainties were clearly identified and characterized, and that potential implications of uncertainties for the technical conclusions drawn were clear; and to provide advice on the overall strengths and limitations of the scientific data used in the document.

Peer reviewers were selected based on the following criteria:

- **Expertise:** Reviewers were experts in large carnivore ecology and management, with particular knowledge in one or more of the following areas: puma population ecology, management, demographics, conservation, and population genetics.
- **Independence:** The reviewers were not employed by the Service. Academic and consulting scientists were sufficiently independent from the Service, as appropriate.
- **Objectivity:** Reviewers were expected to be objective, open-minded, and thoughtful.
- **Advocacy:** Reviewers were not known or recognized for an affiliation with an advocacy position regarding the protection of this species.
- **Conflict of Interest:** Reviewers did not have any financial or other interest that conflicted with or impaired their objectivity.

About Public Participation

- The Service invited public review and comment on the proposed rule to delist the eastern puma due to extinction for 30-days (June 17, 2015 to July17, 2015) and reopened the public comment period for an additional 30-day period (June 28, 2016 to July 28, 2016).
- The Service posted a notice on its website of the final rule, which included a summary of the comments provided by the peer reviewers and the public.

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