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 couguar) 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 July 17, 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.

Contact: Krishna Gifford, Northeast Region ESA Listing Coordinator, Division of Threatened and Endangered Species, 300 Westgate Center Drive, Hadley, MA 01035; Krishna_Gifford@fws.gov; 413-253-8619.