

Big Sandy Crayfish and Guyandotte River Crayfish Critical Habitat Determination and Peer Review Plan

About the Document

By the end of fiscal year 2017, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) will publish a proposed designation of critical habitat for the Big Sandy crayfish (*Cambarus callainus*) and the Guyandotte River crayfish (*C. veteranus*).

About the Peer Review Process

Estimated Peer Review Timeline: June 2017 to September 2017

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 Proposed Critical Habitat Rule for the Big Sandy and Guyandotte River Crayfishes.
- Peer reviewers will not be asked to provide recommendations on the proposed 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 specific ecology of the two crayfish species or in the field of astacology (the study of crayfish), experts in the stressors affecting this species or its habitat, or experts in 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

- On April 7, 2015, the Service published the proposed rule in the *Federal Register* to list the Big Sandy crayfish and the Guyandotte River crayfish as endangered species. At that time, the Service determined that designation of critical habitat was prudent but not determinable because information pertaining to the biological needs of these two species was still lacking. The public was invited to submit comments including new information during two comment periods, April 7, 2015 to June 8, 2015 and December 15, 2015 to January 14, 2016. We finalized the listing of the two species, endangered status for the Guyandotte River crayfish and threatened status for the Big Sandy crayfish, on April 7, 2016.
- Our proposed critical habitat designation will be made available to the public through the eRulemaking website, news releases, direct mailings, and posting on Service websites. 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 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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