

## **Kenk's Amphipod 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 Kenk's amphipod (*Stygobromus kenkior*).

### **About the Peer Review Process**

**Estimated Peer Review Timeline:** September 2017 to October 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 Kenk's amphipod.
- 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 ecology of the Kenk's amphipod, the stressors affecting this species or its habitat, 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 its habitat, 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 September 30, 2016, the Service published a proposed rule in the *Federal Register* to list the Kenk's amphipod as an 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 the species was still lacking. During the September 30, 2016 to November 29, 2016, public comment period, the public was invited to submit comments and new information on the species' biology, range, biological or ecological habitat requirements and population trends.
- 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 final 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.

**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.