

## **Peer Review Plan for the Pacific Walrus – Species Status Assessment Report:**

### **About the Document**

**Title:** Draft Species Status Assessment for the Pacific Walrus (*Odobenus rosmarus divergens*), December 2016 (Version 3.0).

**Estimated Peer Timeline of the Peer Review:** December 2016 – February 2017

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

In accordance with our July 1, 1994 peer review policy (59 FR 34270) and the Office of Management and Budget's December 16, 2004 Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review, we, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service intend to subject the *Species Status Assessment Report (SSA) for the Pacific Walrus* to independent peer review. We will contract with a third party who will select three to five well-qualified independent peer reviewers. Peer reviewers will be requested to review the SSA that will be used to support our listing determination or not warranted finding. 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. Specifically, reviewers will be asked whether the following aspects of Pacific walrus status have been accurately described, and whether available scientific information has been fully considered, or if there is additional scientific information that should be incorporated:

- Taxonomy and species description;
- Distribution;
- Habitat and life history; and
- Status and trend.

Peer reviewers will be selected based on the following criteria:

- Demonstrated extensive experience working with Arctic marine mammals or similar species and climate change effects on marine ecosystems at high latitudes.

- Authored at least 1 manuscript on population dynamics, genetics, status, or viability in a recognized journal, preferably on walruses.
- Experienced as a peer reviewer for scientific publications.
- Independence: Reviewers will not be employed by the Service. Academic and consulting scientists should have sufficient independence from the Service, if the government supports their work.
- Advocacy: Reviewers will not be known or recognized for an affiliation with an advocacy position regarding the subject of this review.
- Conflict of Interest: Reviewers will not have any financial or other interest that conflicts with or that could impair their objectivity.

### **About Public Participation**

This peer review plan is made available to allow the public to monitor our compliance with the Office of Management and Budget's Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review. The SSA along with the listing decision document will be made available to the public through 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.

### **Contact**

For more information, contact Patrick Lemons, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Marine Mammals Management Office, telephone 907-786-3668. Persons who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 800-877-8339.