

Order Statement of Work
Peer Review of the Scientific Findings in the Conservation Objectives Team Report for
the Greater Sage-grouse

5 June 2012

1. Introduction/Background

On December 9, 2011, the Secretary of the Interior co-hosted a meeting with Governor Mead of Wyoming to identify conservation solutions for the Greater sage-grouse (sage-grouse), a candidate for listing under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA). As a follow-up to that meeting the Secretary of the Interior sent Governors within the range of the sage-grouse a letter (dated December 13, 2011) which suggested four actions that should be taken to help preclude the need to list sage-grouse under the (ESA). One item was to clarify, to the greatest extent possible, the actions and outcomes that would likely be needed to support a future decision that listing the sage-grouse was not necessary. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has been tasked by the Secretary to lead this effort for the Department of Interior. The Service has expanded this task to identify the long-term conservation objectives that are needed to ensure the sage-grouse will persist for many decades into the future.

The Service has established the Conservation Objectives Team (COT) - an interagency team comprised of sage-grouse experts from across the species' range – to advise the Service on identifying quantified long- term conservation objectives for the sage-grouse. This team is developing a scientifically-based quantitative assessment of the degree to which threats to the sage-grouse must be ameliorated to ensure the sage-grouse, and its component distinct population segments (DPS), remain viable into the foreseeable future. This written report, when completed, will be used by the Service to inform our species' status review (By court-approved settlement agreement, a review of the Bi-State DPS must be completed by September, 2013 and a range-wide review must be completed no later than the end of September, 2015). The intent of the COT is to produce a report that not only informs our listing determinations, but also outlines the necessary conservation actions to ensure the long-term persistence of healthy populations of the sage-grouse for the foreseeable future. It is anticipated that the COT product will form the basis of conservation decisions and actions for this species by many agencies and individual organizations for many years.

Given the long-term conservation implications of the COT report, and its influential information, the report requires a formal, external, independent scientific peer review before distribution. If the COT report does not provide the best science-based information and analyses, any decisions or conservation actions based on this report may be less effective in the long-term conservation of the sage-grouse.

2. Description of Analyses/Service

The purpose of this review is to provide a formal, independent, external scientific peer review of the information in COT report. It is important that the peer review be conducted by independent qualified experts. The review is limited to the information and analysis in the COT report only, and not a review of the status of the sage-grouse or the habitats on which it relies.

3. Methods, Protocols and/or Scientific Standards

The contractor(s) will provide 3-5 independent, unbiased, scientific reviews of the information in the COT report. At least 3 reviews will be provided, with the fourth and fifth reviews being conducted at the discretion of the Service, depending upon funds available. Factors to be addressed include the scientific merit of the report's primary analysis components (population and habitat parameters) which provide the basis for the formulation of long-term conservation objectives. The reviewers must ensure that any scientific uncertainties are clearly identified and characterized, and the potential implications of the uncertainties for the technical conclusions drawn are clear. Additionally, the reviewers must evaluate whether the long-term conservation objectives reported are likely to provide conservation value to the Greater sage-grouse. The contractor is not required to provide a review of how the conservation objectives will be met.

The independent peer reviewers shall be experienced senior ecologists, who have previously conducted similar reviews or regularly provided reviews of research and conservation articles for the scientific literature. The contractor will be responsible for assigning an experienced, senior and well-qualified manager to lead this review and for the selection of 3-5 well-qualified, independent reviewers. The expertise of the reviewers shall include:

1. A Ph.D. in wildlife ecology, wildlife science, conservation biology, or related field.
2. Demonstrated experience working with endangered species issues and in setting conservation objectives or recovery goals for endangered species.
3. Expert knowledge of grouse biology and population dynamics of lekking birds.
4. Experience as a peer reviewer for scientific publications.

In addition, the reviewers shall have no financial or other conflicts of interest with the outcome or implications of the report. A list of the reviewers and their combined original review comments, without attribution, shall be submitted to the Service. The Service will have an opportunity to seek clarification on any review comments through the contractor (Task 003.1), for a period of 10 days, starting 30 days after the Service receives the report from the contractor. The list of reviewers, the combined comments without attribution, will be part of the final report and included in the Services' Administrative Record.

Three (3) to five (5) reviewers must be engaged in this effort and provide a thorough, objective peer review .

The peer reviewers must consider and respond to the questions listed below, at a minimum, in their reviews.

1. Are the methods and assumptions used in deriving conservation objectives for the sage-grouse clearly stated and logical? If not, please identify the specific methods and assumptions that are unclear or illogical.
2. Are the results presented in the COT Report reasonable? If not, please identify those that are not and the specifics of each situation.
3. Do the authors of the COT Report draw reasonable and scientifically sound conclusions from the scientific information presented in the COT Report? Are there instances in the COT Report where a different but equally reasonable and scientifically sound scientific conclusion might be drawn that differs from the conclusion drawn by the Service? If any instances are found where that is the case, please provide the specifics of that situation.
4. Does the COT Report base its interpretations, analyses and conclusions upon the best available science? If any instances are found where the best available science was not used, please provide the specifics of each situation.
5. Are there any significant peer-reviewed scientific papers that the COT Report omits from consideration that would enhance the scientific quality of the document? Please identify any such papers.
6. Is the scientific foundation of the COT Report reasonable and how can it be strengthened? Please identify any options to strengthen the scientific foundations.

In accordance with the agreement terms and Performance Work Statement, the contractor(s) is (are) reminded of the requirements to protect information and that services shall consist of unbiased assessments through proper management and enforcement of scientific integrity standards, to include conflict of interests. This information is distributed solely for the purpose of pre-dissemination peer review under applicable information quality guidelines. It has not been formally disseminated by the Service. It does not represent and should not be construed to represent any agency determination of policy. Until it is made public, no information from the COT report may be released by the contractor(s) without express written permission from the Service.

4. Required Service (Work) Items - Task Line Item Numbers (TLIN): As described in the agreement's Performance Work Statement, paragraph 2B, the below TLINs are required in the performance of this requirement. The TLINs are different, but interrelated to the tasks listed in task/deliverable and payment schedule:

TLIN 001: Selecting for peer reviews or review panels, or for task orders to provide scientific support.

TLIN 002: Organizing, structuring, leading, and managing the scientific reviews and task order products.

TLIN 003: Managing and producing a final report/product.

TLIN 004: Responding to any follow-up questions from FWS on original review comments (not to exceed 10 consecutive days)

TLIN 005: Maintaining an official record for peer reviews or task orders.

5. Deliverables

The following deliverables are in addition to the agreement's Performance Work Statement paragraph 3, which states, "The Contractor shall provide the COR with three key deliverables: (1) Proposed Timeline, (2) Original and summarized scientific reviews, and (3) Complete Official Record."

There are no additional deliverables. However, the contractor will be required to respond to questions, inquiries, or other related requests after the contract expiration date, and final acceptance, as needed. These request(s) will be by the Contracting Officer Representative (in coordination with the Contracting Officer). Inquires or requests are limited to the products provided, and work performed under this contract (order). Responses include, but not limited to: phone calls, written responses, and/or meetings.

Review comments by the Contracting Officer Representative will be provided to the contractor via the Contracting Officer.

6. Task Schedule.

The period of performance shall not exceed the contract expiration date without a contract modification. In accordance with the terms of the contract, the contractor shall notify the Contracting Officer of any delays. Delays by the Government or Contractor must be rectified by accelerating the next deliverable on a one to one basis (i.e., if the delay was 2 days then the next deliverable must be submitted 2 days early). Deliverables that fall on a holiday or weekend must be delivered on the first work day after the weekend or holiday. The period of performance (contract expiration date) includes all possible holidays or weekend deliveries:

TASK/DELIVERABLE	CALENDAR DAYS AFTER AWARD
Task 1: Contracting Officer and COR will provide access to materials needed for the review	3
Task 2: The contractor(s) shall review appropriate information that will assist in their review, including the March 2010 Greater sage-grouse status review	10 (+7 days)
Task 3: The contractor(s) shall conduct a thorough, objective peer review of the COT report.	20 (+ 10 days)
Task 4: The contractor(s) will provide 3 to 5 expert peer	23 (+3 days)

reviews (combined without attribution) and all applicable official records to the project manager	
Task 5: The project manager summarizes the individual peer reviews and prepares a summary report for the Service	33 (+10 days)
Task 6: The project manager facilitates specific follow-up questions/answers between the Service and the reviewers, without attribution (task limited to a 10-day period, 30 days after delivering initial review comments to the Service).	43 (+10 days)
Task 6: Final report and official record is submitted to the Service	50 (+ 7 days)

7. Official Administrative Record

The preparation of an official administrative record is required.

8. Information Sources

The March 23, 2010 status review (75 FR 13910) for the Greater sage-grouse can be found at: <http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/birds/sagegrouse/>

9. Payment Schedule: In accordance with and in addition to the agreement, the contract will submit invoices via the Internet Payment Platform (IPP) (see agreement). Invoices that do not coincide with a deliverable shall be submitted with a brief status report (not to exceed 1 page). The status report will detail the period of performance, the services performed during the period, key personnel involved, and percentage of the task(s) complete, if other than 100%. Partial payment for task(s) that are not 100% complete will be paid in an amount up to, but not to exceed, 65% of the task's total cost. For instance, if the total cost of the project is \$100.00, 100% of task 2 related cost would be \$10.00. If task 2 is 75% complete, the invoice amount will not exceed 65% or \$6.50.

The payment schedule is as follows:

TASK/DELIVERABLE	% OF EFFORT & PRICE
Task 1: Contracting Officer and COR will provide access to materials needed for the review	0%
Task 2: The contractor(s) shall review appropriate information that will assist in their review, including the March 2010 Greater sage-grouse status review	10%
Task 3: The contractor(s) shall conduct a thorough, objective peer review of the COT report.	30%
Task 4: The contractor(s) will provide their individual review, and all applicable official records to the project manager	0%

Task 5: The project manager summarizes the individual peer reviews and prepares a summary report for the Service.	20%
Task 6. The project manager receives follow-up questions from the Service on any review comment, obtains the reviewers reply and provides the reply comment, without attribution to the Service (limited to a 10-day period)	10%
Task 7: Final report and official record is submitted to the Service	30%
Total	100%

10. Points of Contact:

Contracting Officer's Representative (COR):,Dr, Richard A. Coleman, who can be reached at 303-236-4443 or email: rick_coleman@fws.gov

Contracting Officer, Mr. Steve Gess. Mr. Gess's phone number is 303-236-4334 or email: steve_gess@fws.gov

Project Leader, Dr. Pat Deibert. Dr. Deibert's phone number is 307-772-2374, ext. 226, or email: pat_deibert@fws.gov

11. List of Enclosures/Attachments

None