

Peer Review Plan for the 5-Year Status Reviews – Multiple Species

About the Document

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service may seek peer review of species status review (5-year review) for the species listed at the end of this document. Being included in the list below does not imply that the status review will be peer reviewed, but if significant or new information is provided in the document a peer review may be conducted if the document does not rely on previously peer reviewed information.

Estimated Timeline of Peer Review: 2020-2021

Determination: Under the ESA, we maintain Lists of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants (which we collectively refer to as the List) in title 50 of the Code of Federal Regulations at 50 CFR 17.11(h) (for wildlife) and 50 CFR 17.12(h) (for plants). Listed wildlife and plants can also be found at: http://ecos.fws.gov/tess_public/pub/listedAnimals.jsp and http://ecos.fws.gov/tess_public/pub/listedPlants.jsp, respectively. Section 4(c)(2)(A) of the ESA requires us to review each listed species' status at least once every 5 years. Depending on the source of information and complexity of the status review, the review may undergo a peer review. For additional information about 5-year reviews, refer to our fact sheet at <http://www.fws.gov/endangered/what-we-do/recovery-overview.html>. Whether any single status review is peer reviewed is based on the process laid out below.

About the Peer Review Process

In accordance with our July 1, 1994 peer review policy (59 FR 34270), the Service's August 22, 2016 Director's Memo on the Peer Review Process, 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 (Service) will solicit independent scientific reviews, when required, of the information contained in our status review for these species unless the information has already undergone peer review. The purpose of seeking independent peer review is to ensure use of the best scientific and commercial information available and to ensure and to maximize the quality, objectivity, utility, and integrity of the information upon which the report is based, as well as to ensure that reviews by recognized experts are incorporated into the status review process.

The Service will request peer review from three or more independent experts. We will consider the following criteria.

- **Expertise:** The reviewer should have knowledge of or experience with the species biology, habitats in which they occur, and/or threats to the species.
- **Independence:** The reviewer should not be employed by the Service. Academic, consulting, or government scientists should have sufficient independence from the Service if the government supports their work.
- **Objectivity:** The reviewer should be recognized by his or her peers as being objective, open-minded, and thoughtful. In addition, the reviewer should be comfortable sharing his or her knowledge and perspectives and openly identifying his or her knowledge gaps.
- **Conflict of Interest:** The reviewer should not have any financial or other interest that conflicts or that could impair his or her objectivity or create an unfair competitive advantage. If an otherwise qualified reviewer has an unavoidable conflict of interest, the Service may publicly disclose the conflict.

While expertise is the primary consideration, the Service will select peer reviewers (considering, but not limited to, these selections) that add to a diversity of scientific perspectives. We will not be providing financial compensation to peer reviewers. We will solicit reviews from at least three qualified experts.

The Service will provide each peer reviewer with information explaining their role and instructions for fulfilling that role, the draft 5-year status review, and a conflict of interest form. Peer reviewers will be asked to comment specifically on the quality of the scientific information and analyses and whether the best available information was used or relied on in the document; identify oversights, omissions, and inconsistencies; provide advice on reasonableness of judgments made from the scientific evidence; help ensure that scientific uncertainties are identified and characterized; provide advice on the overall strengths and limitations of the scientific data used in the document; and inform us of any scientific information that we did not use. Peer reviewers will be advised that they are not to provide advice on policy.

Peer reviewers will provide individual, written responses to the Service. Peer reviewers will be advised that their reviews, including their names and affiliations, will: (1) be included in the decisional record of our determinations; and, (2) be available to the public upon request once all reviews are completed. We will summarize and respond to the issues raised by the peer reviewers in the record supporting our determinations.

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 status review will be made available on Service websites. Solicitation of public comment was initiated with the publication of this Federal Register Notice of Initiation (linked above).

Contact

For general information, contact: Carrie Straight, Regional Recovery Coordinator, Atlanta, GA, telephone 404-679-7226.

For species-specific information, please contact the individual/s noted in the Federal Register Notice of Initiation (linked above).

Species with peer reviewed 5-year reviews.

Spiders

- Spruce-fir moss spider

Mammals

- Carolina northern flying squirrel

Fishes

- Duskytail darter
- Laurel dace
- Palezone shiner

Mussels

- Cumberland monkeyface
- Georgia pigtoe
- Ochlockonee moccasinshell
- Slabside pearly mussel
- Tan riffleshell
- Shiny pigtoe

Plants

- *Agave eggersiana*
- Fragrant prickly-apple
- *Gonocalyx concolor*
- Highlands scrub hypericum
- Mountain sweet pitcher plant
- Pigeon wings
- Scrub mint