

**Peer Review Plan:** Biological Report for the Northern Great Plains (NGP)  
Population of Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*)

**Timeline of the Peer review (estimated):**

**Draft document to be disseminated:** April 2023

**Peer review to be initiated:** April 2023

**Peer review to be completed by:** May 2023

**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 will solicit independent scientific reviews of the information contained in the biological report for the NGP piping plover.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) will request peer review from three or more independent experts. We will consider the following criteria when selecting peer reviewers:

- Expertise: The reviewer should have knowledge of or experience with the species or similar species biology.
- 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 their knowledge and perspectives and openly identifying their knowledge gaps.
- Conflict of Interest: The reviewer should not have any financial or other interest that conflicts or that could impair their 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 relevant to the biological report. We will not be providing financial compensation to peer reviewers. We will solicit reviews from at least three qualified experts. After completion of the peer review, we will make the peer reviewers' comments and conflict of interest forms available to the public.

The Service will provide each peer reviewer with information explaining their role and instructions for fulfilling that role, the biological report, and a list of citations as necessary. 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 biological report is based. Peer reviewers will be advised that they are not to provide advice on policy. Rather, they should focus their review on identifying and characterizing scientific uncertainties. Peer reviewers will be asked to answer questions pertaining to the logic of our assumptions, arguments, and conclusions and to provide any other relevant comments, criticisms, or thoughts. Specific questions put to the reviewers include the following:

1. Is our description and analysis accurate, with respect to the species' needs, biology, habitat, population trends, and historical and current distribution?
2. Does the report provide accurate and adequate review and analysis of the current and projected future conditions, and viability, of the NGP piping plover?
3. Are our assumptions and definitions of suitable habitat logical and adequate?
4. Are there any significant oversights, omissions, or inconsistencies in our report?
5. Are the conclusions we reach logical and supported by the evidence we provide?
6. Did we include all the necessary and pertinent literature to support our assumptions/arguments/conclusions?
7. Did we adequately address all assumptions, uncertainties, limitations and implications?

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 (i.e., final rules or withdrawals); 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 the biological report.

### **About Public Participation**

The peer review process will be initiated shortly. We strongly encourage that public comments on the approach of this peer review be submitted by April 20, 2023, in order to allow enough time for processing and consideration. However, we will accept comments on the peer review plan throughout the process.

### **Contact**

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