

## **Peer Review Plan for the Draft Post Delisting Monitoring Plan for the Dwarf-Flowered Heartleaf (*Hexastylis naniflora*)**

### **About the Document**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service intends to seek peer review of post delisting monitoring plan.

**Title:** Draft Post-Delisting Monitoring Plan for Dwarf-Flowered Heartleaf (*Hexastylis naniflora*)

### **Estimated Timeline of Peer Review: 2021**

**Background:** Post-delisting monitoring (PDM) refers to activities undertaken to verify that a species delisted due to recovery remains secure from risk of extinction after the protections of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) no longer apply. The primary goal of PDM is to monitor the species to ensure the status does not deteriorate, and if a substantial decline in the species (numbers of individuals or populations) or an increase in threats is detected, to take measures to halt the decline so that re-proposing it as a threatened or endangered species is not needed.

Section 4(g), added to the ESA in the 1988 reauthorization, requires the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to implement a system in cooperation with the states to monitor for not less than five years the status of all species that have recovered and been removed from the list of threatened and endangered plants and animals (50 CFR 17.11, 17.12, 224.101, and 227.4). This plan is being developed in accordance with the requirements of Section 4(g) of the ESA.

### **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 of the information contained in our PDM plan for the species. 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 plan.

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 document to peer 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 administrative record; 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 final document.

### 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 final document will be made available to the public through a direct email to interested parties and posts on Service websites.

### Contact

For more information, contact:

Rebekah Reid, Asheville Ecological Services Field Office, email: [rebekah\\_reid@fws.gov](mailto:rebekah_reid@fws.gov)