

Peer Review Plan for the Species Status Assessment for Pearl Darter

About the Document

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) may seek peer review of reports or other documents. This peer review is to assess the Species Status Assessment for Pearl Darter.

Title: Draft Species Status Assessment Report for Pearl Darter

Estimated Timeline of Peer Review: fall 2022

Determination: This report will inform a recovery plan.

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 Service will solicit independent scientific reviews, when required, of the information contained in our plan. 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. If substantive public comments are available at the time of the peer review, they will be provided to the peer reviewers.

The Service will request peer review from three or more independent, qualified experts, who will be selected and chosen by the Service, through individual emails. We will consider the following criteria.

- Expertise: The reviewer should have knowledge of or experience with the species biology, habitats in which they occur, methodologies used to survey the species 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.

The Service will provide each peer reviewer with information explaining their role and instructions for fulfilling that role, the draft document, 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 document or 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 SSA and final recovery plan will be made available on Service websites. Solicitation of public comment was initiated with the publication of the Notice of Availability of the Draft Recovery Plan which will appear on the species' ECOS profile: <https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/3970> and the Service's [Draft Recovery Plan Notices Report](#).

Contact

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

For general information about the Pearl darter, contact: Matthew Wagner, Wildlife Biologist, Mississippi Ecological Services Field Office, 601-321-1130.