

Peer Review Plan for the Batch Delisting due Extinction Proposed Rule – Multiple Species

About the Document

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) intends to seek peer review of the five-year status review forms for the following species:

Title: Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Removal of 23 Species due to Extinction from the List of Endangered or Threatened Species

Estimated Timeline of Peer Review: October 2021 – November 2021

Determination: We have published a rule proposing to delist 23 species due to extinction. These species are: bridled white-eye (of Guam), Kakawahie (or Molokai creeper), Kauai akialoa, Kauai nukupuu, Kauai `o`o, large Kauai thrush (kama), Little Mariana fruit bat, Maui akepa, Maui nukupuu, phyllostegia glabra var lanaiensis, Poouli, San Marcos gambusia, Scioto Madtom, flat pigtoe, green blossom (pearly mussel), Ivory-billed woodpecker, southern acornshell, Stirrupshell, Tubercled blossom (pearly mussel), Turgid blossom (pearly mussel), Upland combshell, Yellow blossom (pearly mussel), Bachman's warbler. If we determine that these species should be delisted, we will publish a final rule removing these species from the Federal Lists of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants.

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 of the information contained in our five-year status review forms for these 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 reviews are based, as well as to ensure that reviews by recognized experts are incorporated into the five-year 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.

For each species or group of species, we will solicit the expert opinion of at least three appropriate and independent specialists regarding scientific data and interpretations contained in this proposed rule. In certain cases, species will be grouped together for peer review based on similarities in biology or geographic occurrences. 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 provide financial compensation to peer reviewers.

The Service will provide each peer reviewer with information explaining their role and instructions for fulfilling that role, the five-year status review form, 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 upon 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. The scientific peer review will run concurrent with public review.

About Public Participation

Our proposed delisting rule will be made available to the public through news releases, direct mailings, Regulations.gov, and posting on Service websites (with solicitations for public comment). If appropriate, the Service will implement an outreach plan to provide ample opportunity for public involvement in the review process. If appropriate, the Service will publish a final delisting rule following consideration of all comments received from the public and peer reviewers.

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.

Contact

For more information regarding this peer review plan, contact: Natchanon Ketram at 703-358-2499.