

Peer Review Plan for Texas Heelsplitter (*Potamilus amphichaenus*) and Louisiana Pigtoe (*Pleurobema riddellii*) 12-month Petition Finding

About the Document:

Title: Draft Species Status Assessment Report for the Texas Heelsplitter (*Potamilus amphichaenus*) and Louisiana Pigtoe (*Pleurobema riddellii*)

Purpose: The Species Status Assessment (SSA) report will inform the determination by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) whether the species warrants listing as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. If a listing decision is warranted, the Service will also propose to designate critical habitat for the species, if prudent and determinable, concurrently with the listing determination.

Estimated Dissemination Date of SSA Report: February 2020

About the Peer Review Process

Estimated Peer Review Timeline: February 2020 – March 2020

Peer Review Process:

- We, the Service, will choose three or more independent peer reviewers and invite comment letters from the peer reviewers.
- Peer reviewers will be requested to review the *Draft Species Status Assessment for the Texas Heelsplitter (*Potamilus amphichaenus*) and Louisiana Pigtoe (*Pleurobema riddellii*)* that supports our listing determination or not warranted finding.
- Peer reviewers will not be asked to provide recommendations on the species' listing status, potential delisting criteria, or recovery actions. Peer reviewers will be asked to comment specifically on the quality of any information and analyses used or relied on in the document; identify oversights, omissions, and inconsistencies; provide advice on reasonableness of judgments made from the scientific evidence; ensure that scientific uncertainties are clearly identified and characterized, and that potential implications of uncertainties for the technical conclusions drawn are clear; and provide advice on the overall strengths and limitations of the scientific data used in the document.
- If we propose to list the species, the scientific peer review is held prior to the public review process of the proposal. Therefore, no public comments will be available or provided to the peer reviewers.
- Peer reviewers will be asked to fill out a Conflict of Interest Form.

Peer Reviewers will be selected on the following criteria:

- **Expertise:** Reviewers will be experts in ecology of the Texas Heelsplitter (*Potamilus amphichaenus*) and Louisiana Pigtoe (*Pleurobema riddellii*) or similar taxa, threats to

the species, conservation biology, and land management activities and their effects on freshwater mussels.

- **Independence:** Reviewers will not be employed by the Service. Academic and consulting scientists should have sufficient independence from the Service if the government supports their work
- **Objectivity:** Reviewers will be recognized by their peers as being objective, open-minded, and thoughtful. The reviewers should be comfortable sharing their knowledge and identifying their knowledge gaps.
- **Advocacy:** Reviewers will not be known or recognized for an affiliation with an advocacy position regarding the protection of this species.
- **Conflict of Interest:** Reviewers will not have any financial or other interest that conflicts with or that could impair their objectivity.

About Public Participation:

Our listing determination document will be made available to the public through news releases, direct mailings, and postings on the Service's websites (with solicitations for public comment if we prepare a proposed rule to list the species as threatened or endangered). 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 listing and designation of critical habitat following consideration of all comments received from the public and peer reviews.

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, contact Debra Bills, Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Arlington Ecological Services Field Office at (817) 277-1100F. Also see the species profile for this species via the Service's Endangered Species website at: <https://ecos.fws.gov/>

A copy of the determination will be posted on this website upon completion.