

Peer Review Plan

About the Document

Title: Draft Species Status Assessment Report Version 1.1 and Draft Amendment to the Recovery Plan for the Texas trailing phlox (*Phlox nivalis* subspecies *texensis*)

Estimated Timeline of Peer Review: February – March 2019

Purpose: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has synthesized the best information available for the Texas trailing phlox (*Phlox nivalis* ssp. *texensis*) in the Species Status Assessment (SSA) Report. The Service also identified the need to amend recovery criteria for the Texas trailing phlox (*Phlox nivalis* ssp. *texensis*) recovery plan. Concurrently, the Service used the information from the SSA Report to develop the proposed recovery plan modification. In the proposed modification, we synthesize the adequacy of the existing recovery criteria, show amended recovery criteria, and provide the rationale supporting the proposed recovery plan modification. Once finalized, the modification will be an addendum that supplements the recovery plan, superseding only the affected recovery criteria from the previous recovery plan version.

About the Peer Review Process: In accordance with Service policy on peer review (59 FR 34270, July 1, 1994), the Director's Memo on the Peer Review Process (August 22, 2016), as well as the Office of Management and Budget - Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review (December 16, 2004), the Service will solicit independent scientific review of our SSA Report and the proposed recovery plan amendment from three or more independent experts. The purpose of these reviews is to confirm use of the best scientific and commercial information available; ensure and maximize the quality, objectivity, utility, and integrity of the information upon which the report is based; and, assure that reviews by recognized experts are incorporated into the SSA and recovery processes. Reviewers will receive information explaining their role, instructions for fulfilling that role, the SSA Report and recovery plan amendment, and a conflict of interest form. The Service will not provide financial compensation to reviewers.

In an effort to select the most qualified reviewers, the Service will consider the following criteria:

- **Expertise:** Reviewers will be experts or should have knowledge in one or more of the following areas: the ecology of the genus *Phlox*, population level ecology and dynamics, natural and prescribed burning, longleaf pine community, and/or familiar with the habitats of the Big Thicket area of Texas.
- **Independence:** Reviewers are not employed by the Service. Academic and consulting scientists have sufficient independence from the Service or the Department of the Interior, if the government supports their work.
- **Objectivity:** Reviewers are 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 are not known or recognized for an affiliation with an advocacy position regarding the protection of this species under the Endangered Species Act.
- **Conflict of Interest:** Reviewers should not have any financial or other interest that conflicts with or that could impair their objectivity.

Timeline for Peer Review:

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. A 30-day public comment period for the draft amendment will begin when the Notice of Availability publishes in the Federal Register. During this period, the public will have the opportunity to review and provide input to the draft recovery plan amendment. The Service will also implement an outreach plan to provide ample opportunity for public involvement in the review process, and the draft amendment will be posted on Service websites with solicitations for public comment.

Contact

For more information, contact Charles Ardizzone, Project Leader, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Texas Coastal Ecological Services Field Office, at 281-286-8282 extension 26506 or chuck_ardizzone@fws.gov.