

## Peer Review Plan

### Draft Amendment to the fountain darter, Texas blind salamander, *Zizania texana* Recovery Plan

#### About the Document(s)

**Title:** San Marcos and Comal Springs and Associated Aquatic Ecosystems Recovery Plan, Draft Amendment 1

**Estimated Dissemination Date for Peer Review:**

August 2019

**Purpose:**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has identified best available information that indicates the need to amend recovery criteria for the fountain darter (*Etheostoma foniticola*), Texas blind salamander (*Typhlomolge rathbuni*), and *Zizania texanus* (Texas wild-rice). In this 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

**Type of Review:**

Influential

**Timeline for Peer Review:**

Peer review of the draft amendment will be concurrent with the public comment period (30 days) that is identified in a Federal Register Notice of Availability.

**Reviewers:**

The Service will solicit reviews from at least three independent scientific reviewers with expertise in the species' ecology. Reviewers will be selected based upon the following criteria:

- **Expertise:** Reviewers will be experts in ecology of these species or a related field and should have knowledge in one or more of the following areas: the Edwards Aquifer, ecology, demography, management, and conservation of aquatic plants, freshwater fish, and neotenic salamanders.
- **Independence:** Reviewers are not employed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Academic and consulting scientists have sufficient independence from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife 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.

### **About Public Participation**

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 U.S. Fish and Wildlife 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 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service websites with solicitations for public comment.

The draft recovery plan amendment will be available at:

Texas blind salamander: <https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp0/profile/speciesProfile?spcode=D001>

Fountain darter: <https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp0/profile/speciesProfile?spcode=E00T>

Texas wild-rice: <https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp0/profile/speciesProfile?spcode=Q24A>

This peer review plan is made available on this website 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 Adam Zerrenner, Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Austin Ecological Services Field Office, at 512-490-0057.