



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Post Office Box 1306
Albuquerque, N.M. 87103

Peer Review Guidelines

January 31, 2006

The following guidelines will be employed by the Southwest Region in compliance with the Office of Management and Budget's December 16, 2004 Bulletin: Issuance of OMB's "Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review"¹

Peer review for scientific assessments supporting Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (ESA) listing, delisting (including 5-year reviews), recovery planning decisions and other program's scientific disseminations², such as Comprehensive Conservation Plans required in the National Wildlife Refuges System Improvement Act of 1997, issued in accordance with the appropriate legislation will be conducted based on categorizing the assessment as requiring either a standard, increased, or higher level of peer review. Peer review for all listing, delisting, recovery planning assessments and other disseminations will be conducted concurrent with public comment periods required by the ESA or the Administrative Procedure Act. In any final decision document (rule or notice of withdrawal) the Service will summarize the opinions of the independent peer reviewers received on the species under consideration and include all such reports, opinions, and other data in the administrative record of the final decision.

Independent peer reviewers who have demonstrated expertise and specialized knowledge related to the scientific area under consideration should be selected from the academic and scientific community, Tribal and other Native American groups, Federal and State agencies, and the private sector.

Standard Effort

Standard Effort Assessments (SEA) would be those with minimal societal impact with few affected private or public entities. The complexity of the assessment is such that we would expect a reviewer to require no more than one day to complete their review.

For SEAs, the Service will seek to obtain at least three independent reviews of the scientific assessment.

¹ Go to: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/inforeg/infopoltech.html> under the heading "Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review (December 16, 2004).

² See Director's December 14, 2005 memorandum: Implementation of OMB's Peer Review Bulletin for definitions of terms.

Increased Effort

Increased Effort Assessments (IEA) would be those with moderate societal impact such as actions pertaining to a species found within one state, or a fairly restricted area within two states, with a moderate amount of affected private parties. The complexity of the assessment is such that we would expect a reviewer to require no more than two days to complete their review.


For IEAs, the Service will seek to obtain at least five independent reviews of the scientific assessment. The Service will seek nominations of reviewers from interests outside of the Service, including potentially affected local, State, or Tribal governments.

Higher Effort

Higher Effort Assessments (HEA) would be those with consequential societal impact such as actions pertaining to a widespread species found in more than one state, or actions that affect many private and public entities. The complexity of the assessments could result in a reviewer needing more than two days to complete their review.

For HEAs, the Service will attempt to obtain at least seven independent reviews of the scientific assessment. The Service will seek nominations of reviewers from interests outside of the Service, including potentially affected local, State, or Tribal governments and subject matter experts from academia

Signed:


Acting
Regional Director

Date: January 31, 2006