

About the Document:

Title: Proposed Removal of the Gray Wolf in Wyoming from the Federal List of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife

Timeline of the Peer review:

Draft document disseminated: October 2011

Peer review initiated: October 2011

Peer review to be completed by: Close of the comment period

Final determination regarding proposed rule expected: Late Summer or early Fall 2012

About the Peer Review Process:

In accordance with our July 1, 1994 peer review policy ([59 FR 34270](#)) and the Office of Management and Budget's December 16, 2004 [Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review](#), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service intends to subject this proposal to peer review. A peer review panel, managed by a third-party contractor, will conduct this assessment.

The panel will consist of a maximum of five members. The panel will include individuals with a variety of professional qualifications and experience related to gray wolf life history and biology, predator/wildlife management, population viability, genetics, and subpopulation integration within metapopulations. The Contractor will select panelists with additional areas of expertise as needed. Reviewers need to be independent of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Idaho Department of Fish & Game, Montana Department of Fish & Wildlife, and all Wyoming State agencies including the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission. Reviewers must be free of any conflict of interest that would preclude their providing an objective review of the Plan and proposed rule. Final approval of the panel will be provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The panel will review key documents relied upon to support the conclusions in the proposed rule. Specific questions that are to be addressed include:

1. Is the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's description and analysis of the biology, population, and distribution accurate?
2. Does the proposed rule provide accurate and adequate review and analysis of the factors relating to the threats?
3. Are the conclusions the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reaches, including their projection of maintenance of a viable population, logical and supported by the evidence they provide?
4. Did the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service include all the necessary and pertinent literature to support their assumptions / arguments / conclusions?

5. Is it reasonable for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to conclude that Wyoming's approach to wolf management, as described in the Plan and the proposed rule, in the context of wolf management throughout the entire Northern Rocky Mountain region, is likely to maintain Wyoming's wolf population above recovery levels [recovery goal as described in the 2009 delisting as: "Thirty or more breeding pairs (an adult male and an adult female that raise at least 2 pups until December 31) comprising 300+ wolves in a metapopulation (a population that exists as partially isolated sets of subpopulations) with genetic exchange between subpopulations (Service 1994; Fritts and Carbyn 1995). Step-down recovery targets require Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming to each maintain at least 10 breeding pairs and 100 wolves by managing for a safety margin of at least 15 breeding pairs and at least 150 wolves in mid-winter. Genetic exchange can be natural or, if necessary, agency managed."]?]
6. Is it reasonable for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to conclude that Wyoming's approach to wolf management, as described in the Plan and the proposed rule, in the context of wolf management throughout the entire Northern Rocky Mountain region, is likely to provide for sufficient levels of gene flow to prevent genetic problems from negatively impacting the Greater Yellowstone Area's population or the larger Northern Rocky Mountain metapopulation in a manner that would meaningfully impact viability?

Each peer reviewer will review information related to the proposed rule that is within their area of expertise and provide an individual memorandum that will be incorporated into a peer review report. The peer review report will include at a minimum: a summary of the scope and objectives of the review; the process undertaken to select the peer reviewers; the reviewers selected, with a brief summary of each of their qualifications; description of how the objective was accomplished; a list of all information considered by the reviewers; a summarized answer to each peer review question (with discussion of any disagreements between panelists); any additional information the panel believes would aid agency decision-making; and the individual panelist review memorandums, if consensus was not reached within the panel. This assessment will be completed during the public comment period and posted online at <http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/mammals/wolf/> to allow for public review and comment.

Recognizing that revisions to Wyoming statutes will be required to implement the State's revised wolf management plan, the panel will be provided an opportunity to amend their report, as necessary, following the legislative session. For example, if the legislature makes only those changes necessary to allow Wyoming to implement the Plan as written, no additional review is anticipated. If additional changes or sideboards are put in place, the panel would be provided an opportunity to amend the peer review report, as necessary.

We will summarize and respond to the issues raised by the peer reviewers in a special section of the final rulemaking determination. Because this peer review process is running concurrently with public review of the proposed action, peer reviewers will not be provided public comments (although comments may be viewed through <http://www.regulations.gov>). A final determination regarding this proposed action is expected by late Summer or early Fall 2012.

About Public Participation

The peer review process will be initiated immediately upon publication of the proposed rule. The public may comment on the approach of this peer review through the normal comment process associated with the proposed rule. Public comments are scheduled to be accepted for 120 days after the proposed rule is published. You may submit comments by one of the following methods:

- Electronically: Go to the Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. In the Keyword box, enter Docket No. [FWS-R6-ES-2011-0039], which is the docket number for this rulemaking. Then, in the Search panel on the left side of the screen, under the Document Type heading, click on the Proposed Rules link to locate this document. You may submit a comment by clicking on “Send a Comment or Submission.”
- By hard copy: Submit by U.S. mail or hand-delivery to: Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS-R6-ES-2011-0039; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, MS 2042-PDM; Arlington, VA 22203.

E-mail or faxed comments will not be accepted. All comments will be posted on <http://www.regulations.gov>. This generally means that any personal information you provide will be posted (see the Public Comments section of the proposed rule for more information).

Contact

For more information, contact U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Mountain-Prairie Region Office, Ecological Services Division, 134 Union Blvd., Lakewood, Colorado 80228, telephone 303-236-7400. Persons who use a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) may call the Federal Information Relay Service (FIRS) at 800-877-8339.