

Peer Review Plan

Proposed rule to list *Platanthera integrilabia* (white fringeless orchid) as threatened

About the Document

Title: Proposed rule to list *Platanthera integrilabia* as threatened

Purpose: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has prepared a proposal to list *Platanthera integrilabia* (white fringeless orchid) as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. The proposed listing rule published in the **Federal Register** on September 15, 2015, for review and comments. The Service also determined that it would not be prudent to designate critical habitat for *P. integrilabia*, because doing so would increase the threat of unauthorized collection by publishing detailed descriptions and maps of occupied sites.

Comment Submittal:

(1) *Electronically:* Go to the Federal eRulemaking Portal: <http://www.regulations.gov>. In the Search box, enter FWS–R4–ES–2015–0129, which is the docket number for the proposed listing. You may submit a comment by clicking on “Comment Now!”

(2) *By hard copy:* Submit by U.S. mail or hand-delivery to: Public Comments Processing, Attn: FWS–R4–ES–2015–0129; Division of Policy and Directives Management; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, MS: BPHC; 5275 Leesburg Pike, Falls Church, VA 22041-3803.

About the Peer Review Process

Type of Review: Influential

Date of Peer Review: Peer review for the proposed listing rule will occur between September 15, 2015, and November 16, 2015.

Dissemination Date of the Final Rulemaking Document: September 15, 2016

Process: The Service is soliciting written comments from three independent scientific reviewers. Formal request for peer review are made by individual letters to experts from various backgrounds at several universities, institutions, and agencies. Reviewers have been selected by the Service for their recognized expertise with *Platanthera integrilabia* or its habitat, as well as general expertise with plant ecology and conservation. We are following our national policy on peer review and our regional approach for peer review for rulemakings. In selecting peer reviewers, we considered four key factors – expertise, balance, independence, and avoidance of conflict of interest.

This review is occurring concurrently with the public comment period for the proposed action. The public comment period is now open and will close on November 16, 2015.

The Service will use the information received from the peer review process, as appropriate, to develop the final listing rule for *Platanthera integrilabia*.

The Service has provided each peer reviewer with information necessary to complete the peer review. We have requested that reviewers use the Southeast Region's guidance to ensure that reviews comply with the 1994 policy statement for listing and critical habitat designation under the Act. Peer reviewers are expected to: review all material provided; identify, review, and provide other relevant data; and provide written comments on relevance and soundness of data, analysis or assumptions of data, and whether we have used the best available science in making the proposed determinations. Peer review comments will be public documents.

Peer Reviewers

- Matt Richards, Conservation Coordinator, Department of Science and Conservation, Atlanta Botanical Garden
- Dennis Whigham, Ph.D., Senior Research Plant Ecologist, Smithsonian Environmental Research Center
- Lawrence W. Zettler, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Biology, Illinois College

About Public Participation

Public comments on the proposed listing are being sought through the publication of the proposed rule in the **Federal Register**, a press release of the availability of the proposal to interested parties, and a public hearing if requested. The Service will consider all comments received prior to publishing a final determination.

The Service published a notice in the **Federal Register** for the proposed listing of *Platanthera integrilabia* as threatened. A summary of the results of the peer review will also be published with the final rule determination in the **Federal Register**.

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: Geoff Call, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Tennessee Ecological Services Office, 931-525-4983 or geoff_call@fws.gov.