

Proposed Endangered Status for Cape Sable thoroughwort (*Chromolaena frustrata*), Florida semaphore cactus (*Consolea corallicola*) and Aboriginal prickly-apple (*Harrisia aboriginum*), and Designation of Critical Habitat for *Chromolaena frustrata*

Peer Review Plan

About the Document

Title: Proposed Endangered Status for Cape Sable thoroughwort (*Chromolaena frustrata*), Florida semaphore cactus (*Consolea corallicola*), and aboriginal prickly-apple (*Harrisia aboriginum*) and Designation of Critical Habitat for *C. frustrata*.

Purpose: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is preparing a proposal to list the Cape Sable thoroughwort (*Chromolaena frustrata*), Florida semaphore cactus (*Consolea corallicola*), and aboriginal prickly-apple (*Harrisia aboriginum*); three plant species endemic to South Florida, under the Endangered Species Act, and designate 3,466 hectares (8,565 acres) of land in Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties, Florida as critical habitat for *C. frustrata*. A proposed regulation was published in the Federal Register on October 11, 2012, for review and comments.

About the Peer Review Process

Type of Review: Influential

Date of Peer Review: Peer review will occur between October 11, 2012 and December 10, 2012.

Estimated Dissemination Date of the Final Rulemaking Document: October 11, 2013

Process: The Service has solicited written comments from seven independent scientific reviewers. Reviewers have been selected by the Service for their recognized expertise with the three plant species, 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. These reviewers are located at the National Park Service, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, Florida Division of Forestry, University of South Florida, Fairchild Tropical Botanical Garden, and Institute for Regional Conservation.

Peer review of the scientific information used in our analysis of the status of the species and the validity of the data will be requested, but peer reviewers will not be asked to provide recommendations on the proposed legal status of the species. The Service will use the information received from the peer review, as appropriate, in the final determination of listing and critical habitat designation for Cape Sable thoroughwort

(*Chromolaena frustrata*), Florida semaphore cactus (*Consolea corallicola*), and aboriginal prickly-apple (*Harrisia aboriginum*).

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 December 10, 2012. The Service will use the information received from the peer review process, as appropriate, to develop the final listing rule for the species indicated above.

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 national 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 determination. Peer review comments will be public documents.

About Public Participation

Public comments on the proposed listing and critical habitat designation will be sought with a proposed rule published in the Federal Register and by mail to interested parties, 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* of the proposed listing for Cape Sable thoroughwort (*Chromolaena frustrata*), Florida semaphore cactus (*Consolea corallicola*), and aboriginal prickly-apple (*Harrisia aboriginum*) and designation of critical habitat for Cape Sable thoroughwort (*Chromolaena frustrata*). 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.

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