

## **Proposed Listing of three Caribbean Plants and Designation of Critical Habitat**

### **Peer Review Plan**

#### **About the Document**

**Title:** Propose listing of *Agave eggersiana* and *Gonocalyx concolor* as endangered and *Varronia rupicola* as threatened including Designation of its Critical Habitat

**Purpose:** The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) prepared a proposal to list *Agave eggersiana* (a centennial plant endemic to the island of St. Croix, USVI), *Gonocalyx concolor* (a scandent shrub endemic to the Sierra de Cayey, Puerto Rico) and *Varronia rupicola* (a small shrub endemic to the Puerto Rican bank) under the Endangered Species Act. The Service also proposes the designation of critical habitat for these species as follows; 50.6 hectares (249 acres) for *A. eggersiana*, 80.1 hectares (198 acres) for *G. concolor* and 2,648 hectares (6,547 acres) for *V. rupicola*.

The proposed regulations were published in the Federal Register on October 22, 2013, for review and comments.

#### **About the Peer Review Process**

**Type of Review:** Influential

**Date of Peer Review:** Peer review will occur between October 22, 2013, 2013 and December 23, 2013

**Estimated Dissemination Date of the Final Rulemaking Document:** October 22, 2014

**Process:** The Service will conduct external peer review of these documents through formal requests for peer review from at least nine independent scientific reviewers experienced with the biology and ecology of these species from the Department of Planning and Natural Resources, U.S. Department of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service, St. George Botanical Garden, Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources, University of Puerto Rico- Mayagüez Campus, Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History and Royal Botanical Garden (Kew). Peer review of the scientific information used in our analysis of the status of these species and whether we used the best available science in making our proposed determinations will be requested. However, 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 to list these three Caribbean Plants as endangered and to designate its critical habitat.

#### **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 notices in the *Federal Register* of the proposed listing and designation of critical habitat for these species. A summary of the results of the peer review will be published with the final rule determination also 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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