

Charge to Peer Reviewers – Designation of Critical Habitat for Beringia Distinct Population Segment of the Bearded Seal

Peer Review of the Critical Habitat Evaluation in the Proposed Rule

Thank you for agreeing to participate as a peer reviewer of the evaluation of critical habitat contained in the proposed rule to designate critical habitat for the Beringia distinct population segment (DPS) of the bearded seal under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). We appreciate your willingness to help with this important effort to ensure and maximize the quality, objectivity, utility, and integrity of the scientific information upon which the critical habitat designation is based.

Review Directive:

We request that you review the evaluation of available data on habitat uses and needs of Beringia DPS bearded seals and the use and interpretation of this information in making conclusions regarding what areas meet the definition of critical habitat under the ESA (specifically, see sections titled “Background” through “Unoccupied Areas”), and provide comments on the following topics:

1. The accuracy, completeness and relevance of the scientific information considered; particularly whether there is any relevant information available that was not considered.
2. Whether scientific uncertainties are adequately identified and characterized.
3. Whether the document provides a well-reasoned rationale for the proposed critical habitat based on the best scientific information available.

Peer Reviewer Requirements:

The President’s Office of Management and Budget (OMB) published a Peer Review Bulletin (December 2004) that requires online posting of this peer review as it has been determined to be “influential.” To ensure that we have a transparent process for public disclosure, names, affiliations, and comments of each peer reviewer must be posted online. The comments, however, will not be attributed to individual peer reviewers. Comments will be compiled and made publicly available without attribution to individual reviewer. Previously submitted peer reviews are available at http://www.cio.noaa.gov/services_programs/prplans/PRsummaries.html. However, please note that if NMFS receives a Freedom of Information Act request, anonymity of peer reviewers or comments cannot be guaranteed.

Review Logistics:

1. Please summarize your comments in a letter that provides a brief overview, followed by more detailed responses to the specific review questions identified above.
2. If you are not a federal employee, please complete the enclosed confidential “Conflict of Interest Disclosure” form, and return it with your review – please note that this form requires inclusion of a CV.
3. Comments should be submitted electronically to: tammy.olson@noaa.gov.

Your participation in this peer review is important to the critical habitat designation process and we appreciate your time and effort in this review.

Peer Review of the Draft Impact Analysis Report for the Proposed Rule:

Thank you for agreeing to participate as a peer reviewer of the draft impact analysis report (i.e., draft RIR/ESA Section 4(b)(2) Preparatory Assessment/IRFA report) for the proposed rule to designate critical habitat for the Beringia distinct population segment of the bearded seal under the ESA. We appreciate your willingness to help with this important effort to ensure and maximize the quality, objectivity, utility, and integrity of the scientific information upon which the critical habitat designation is based

Review Directive:

We request that you review the information considered in the draft impact analysis report and provide comments on the following topics:

1. The accuracy, quality, and completeness of the information considered, particularly if any additional information exists that was not considered.
2. Whether the analysis applies well-accepted and appropriate methods to identify potentially affected parties and estimate impacts.
3. Whether the assumptions used in the analysis are reasonable and supported by available information.
4. Whether uncertainties in the information are reasonably identified and characterized.

Peer Reviewer Requirements:

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) published a Peer Review Bulletin (December 2004) that requires online posting of this peer review as it has been determined to be “influential.” To ensure that we have a transparent process for public disclosure, names, affiliations, and comments of each peer reviewer must be posted online. The comments, however, will not be attributed to individual peer reviewers. Comments will be compiled and made publicly available without attribution to individual reviewer. Previously submitted peer reviews are available at http://www.cio.noaa.gov/services_programs/prplans/PRsummaries.html. However, please note that if NMFS receives a Freedom of Information Act request, anonymity of peer reviewers or comments cannot be guaranteed.

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