

Peer Review Plan for the Gray Wolf (*Canis lupus*) in the Eastern United States Species Status Assessment Report

About the Document

Title: Species Status Assessment Report for the Gray Wolf (*Canis lupus*) in the Eastern United States

Purpose: The Species Status Assessment (SSA) report will inform the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's (Service) recovery planning efforts for listed gray wolves (*Canis lupus*). The information in the SSA report is likely to be influential scientific information.

About the Peer Review Process

Estimated Peer Review Timeline: October 2024 – January 2024

Type of Peer Review: The Service will hire an external contractor to conduct a blind peer review process of the draft SSA report. The contractor will be responsible for identifying peer reviewers and reviewers will provide individual, written responses to the Contractor, who will relay them to the Service. The Service will remain unaware of what individuals conducted peer review until the process has concluded. After both completion of the peer review and the draft recovery plan, the Service will make the peer reviewers' comments and conflict of interest forms available to the public.

Anticipated Number of Reviewers: The Service will request review from at least three, and up to five individuals.

Reviewer Selection Method: The external contractor will be responsible for identifying and selecting appropriate peer reviewers. In selecting peer reviewers, they will consider four key factors: expertise, independence, objectivity, and avoidance of conflict of interest.

- **Expertise:** The peer reviewers must have expert knowledge in wildlife biology, wildlife population management, and managed mammal populations involving wolves and/or other carnivores. In addition, at least two reviewers must also have substantial expertise with population modeling and statistical analyses of harvested carnivores – equivalent to being the primary modeler on at least one peer reviewed scientific publication on the topic.
- **Independence:** The peer reviewers should not be employed by the Service. Academic, consulting or government scientists should have sufficient independence from the Service if the government supports their work.
- **Objectivity:** The peer reviewers should be recognized by their peers as being objective, open-minded, and thoughtful. In addition, the reviewers should be comfortable sharing their knowledge and perspectives and openly identifying their knowledge gaps.
- **Conflict of Interest:** The peer reviewers should not have any financial or other interest that

conflicts or that could impair his or her objectivity or create an unfair competitive advantage. If an otherwise qualified reviewer has an unavoidable conflict of interest, the Service may publicly disclose the conflict.

We are not seeking nominations for peer reviewers from the public.

Necessary Expertise: Peer reviewers will have expertise on gray wolves or related carnivores, the ecosystems in which the species lives, the threats to or management of the species or its habitat, or the analytical methods (e.g., population modeling) we used in the SSA report.

Peer reviewers will not be asked to provide recommendations on a classification determination or any other associated rulemakings or policy determinations under the Endangered Species Act such as recovery planning elements. Peer reviewers will be asked to comment specifically on the quality of any information and analyses used or relied on in the document; identify oversights, omissions, and inconsistencies; provide advice on reasonableness of judgments made from the scientific evidence; ensure that scientific uncertainties are clearly identified and characterized, and that potential implications of uncertainties for the technical conclusions drawn are clear; and provide advice on the overall strengths and limitations of the scientific data used in the document.

About public participation

We anticipate making the final SSA and draft recovery plan available to the public around December 2025, at the Service's [Draft Recovery Plan Notices](#) page and we will provide an opportunity for public comment on the draft recovery plan. At that time, we will also make the peer review comments on the draft SSA report publicly available at: <https://www.fws.gov/library/categories/peer-review-plans>.

This peer review plan is made available to allow the public to monitor our compliance with the Office of Management and Budget's Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review. The public is invited to submit comments on this peer review plan by contacting the agency person listed below.

Contact

For more information, contact Rachel London at (703) 358-2491 or Rachel_london@fws.gov.

Also, for more information on gray wolves, see: <https://www.fws.gov/species/gray-wolf-canis-lupus>