



United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Pacific Southwest Region
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IN REPLY REFER TO
FWS/R8

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Memorandum

To: Regional Directorate, Region 8

From: Regional Director, Pacific Southwest Region
Sacramento, California

Subject: Scientific Peer Review Reporting, Submission and Updates

In 2004, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued a "Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review" that contains provisions for peer review at all federal agencies. The OMB Bulletin applies to influential scientific information and highly influential scientific assessments. FWS guidance, "U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Information Quality Guidelines and Peer Review (revised June 2012)", gives further direction on the requirement to provide draft and final peer review reports for influential scientific information and highly influential scientific assessments to the public.

To comply with OMB and FWS guidance, Programs should submit the appropriate peer review plans or other documentation, per the Standard Operating Procedure (attached), so that this documentation can be uploaded to the Region's peer review website.

All Region 8 posted peer review information, including draft and final peer review reports and their associated documents, can be found at <http://www.fws.gov/cno/Science/peerreview.html>. Please have your program lead identify FY2018 additions for upload to the website and review existing draft and final peer review reports on the website for necessary updates to existing FY2014-FY2017 information.

Please confirm the name of your programmatic lead with Larry Rabin, Assistant Regional Director, Science Applications (larry_rabin@fws.gov; 916-978-6160). Each program lead is to work with managers in their program to ensure that scientific peer review reports are drafted and/or finalized as appropriate.

Please note that Regional Director's Order Number 14-02 on this subject is no longer in effect.

Attachments

Region 8 Standard Operating Procedure
For Making Scientific Peer Review Reports Available to the Public on the USFWS Website
(Last Revision: Fall 2017)

Purpose

This standard operating procedure serves as a guide for Pacific Southwest Region staff on development and assembly of appropriate peer review packages for posting on the USFWS website.

Background

In 2004 the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) issued a “Final Information Quality Bulletin for Peer Review” that contains provisions for peer review at all federal agencies. The OMB Bulletin applies to influential scientific information and highly influential scientific assessments.

In accordance with the guidance document “U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Information Quality Guidelines and Peer Review (revised June 2012)”, and to comply with OMB guidance, peer review plans for influential scientific information and highly influential scientific assessments shall be made available to the public. FWS will make these plans available on the Regional website or the National Program website.

For the purpose of peer review reporting, the document “U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Information Quality Guidelines and Peer Review” defines the terms *influential* and *highly influential*. Each program should use these definitions to determine which peer reviewed documents are to be posted to the website.

III-10 Influential, when used in the phrase “influential scientific, financial, or statistical information,” means that we can reasonably determine that dissemination of the information will have or does have a clear and substantial impact on important public policy or private sector decisions, and thus, a decision or action to be taken by the Director, FWS (some may be delegated to Regional or Assistant Directors). We are authorized to define influential in ways appropriate for us, given the nature and multiplicity of issues for which we are responsible. As a general rule, FWS considers an impact clear and substantial when a specific piece of information or body of information is a principal basis for a FWS position (see section VI-5). Information is influential if the same decision would be difficult to arrive at if that information was absent. It should also be noted that the definition applies to “information” itself, not to decisions that the information may support. Even if a decision or action by FWS is itself very important, a particular piece of information supporting it may or may not be “influential.”

III-11 Highly Influential applies to influential scientific information that the FWS determines to be a scientific assessment that: (i) could have a potential impact of more than \$500 million in any year, or (ii) is novel, controversial, or precedent-setting or has significant interagency interest.

Some examples of documents that, if undergoing peer review and deemed influential or highly influential, would require Regional website posting of peer review plans/peer reviews: Endangered Species Act Proposed Listings and 10(j) Rules, Draft Recovery Plans, Environmental Assessments or Impact Statements, Biological Opinions, etc.

Web Posting Format

There are certain web-posting policies that must be considered when developing and assembling peer reviewed packages for websites. These policies are set using legal mandates and technical requirements that must be followed to successfully comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), for accessibility under Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1972 (Section 508), and other federal statutory requirements. To ensure compliance, when asked to submit peer review documents, you will be provided formatting instructions for documents to be submitted to the Region's website manager. Please ensure that you follow these instructions.

Process

In accordance with section VI-6 of the guidance document "U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Information Quality Guidelines and Peer Review," Region 8 will post (and update every 6 months) our forecasted Peer Review Agenda on our Regional website and link to the national FWS Peer Review Agenda on the national FWS website. This task will be accomplished using the following process:

1. Every 6 months, typically in Spring and Fall, the Science Applications ARD will draft a memo for Regional Director signature, requesting that ARDs submit peer review plans or other documentation for their program, to be uploaded to the Region's peer review website.
2. Following memo signature, the Science Applications ARD will provide other ARDs with additional information necessary to facilitate each program's response to the request (e.g. Standard Operating Procedure; Timeline for Completion; Peer Review Reporting Checklist; Instructions for Submitting Peer Review Documents, etc.)
3. Each ARD will designate a Regional Office program lead to coordinate their program's submission.
4. Program leads will forward the Regional Director's request to their program's Field Stations and allow Field Stations two weeks to submit the appropriate information to the program lead.
5. Program leads will review their Program's submitted documentation and coordinate any necessary revisions. Program leads will have two weeks to review field-submitted documentation and upload their program's documents to the Region's share drive, according to the provided instructions.
6. Once uploading is complete, each program lead will email the Science Applications ARD and the Region's website manager to notify them that their program's information is ready for posting.
7. The Region's website manager will review all submitted documentation for compliance measures and suitable format prior to posting on the website, and shall review all links on the website for function. The Region's website manager has two weeks to complete this process.

Per Section VI-7 of the Information Quality Guidelines and Peer Review, peer review plans and other associated documents deemed necessary must remain posted until the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) reports to Congress for the year in which that peer review occurred. Generally, for a peer review conducted in FY1, the OMB report to Congress is submitted about the 3rd quarter of FY2, but may be later. After the report to Congress has been submitted by OMB, the peer review plan and attendant links may be archived, but still should be retrievable for 6 years through some reasonable means if the public seeks a copy of it. The Science Applications ARD shall advise the Region's website manager when to remove documents and arrange for electronic storage of the documents for the remaining required time frame in accordance with section VI-7 of the Information Quality Guidelines and Peer Review.