

June 25, 2009

Dear :

Thank you for agreeing to review the Atlantic wolffish status review report. The Atlantic wolffish biological review team (BRT) has been collaborating since January, 2009 to produce this report. As the final step in completing this document, we are asking you to review the document to ensure that its content is factually supported, is based on the best available data, and the methodology and conclusions are scientifically valid.

As you will see, the status review report contains information as specified in the Endangered Species Act (ESA) including a determination of what constitutes the species under review (e.g., whether a species can be delineated into subspecies or separate distinct population segments) and a formatted analysis of the five factors specified in section 4 of the Act. We intend for the status review report to provide sufficient detail as to why certain portions of the report are conducted in a particular fashion. However, if you have any questions about the ESA protocols for evaluating the status of a species, please feel free to contact my staff anytime throughout this review process. Copies of the reports and papers cited in the status review report are available upon request.

As stated above, your review is designed to ensure that the best available data for this species have been incorporated and analyzed appropriately. As such, we request that you provide us with your individual opinion on the following specific issues or sections of the status review report:

- a. Concerning distinct population segments, is the species delineation supported by the information presented and currently available?
- b. In general, does the status review report include and cite the best scientific and commercial information available on the species and threats to it and to its habitat?
- c. In general, are the scientific conclusions sound and derived logically from the results?
- d. Where available, are opposing scientific studies or theories acknowledged and discussed?

Please submit your comments to my staff on or before July 7th via e-mail or US postal mail. Please summarize your comments into a report or letter that provides a brief overview followed by a more detailed review of the specific issues we have asked you to review above (A – D). Comments as to whether the species should be listed under the ESA will not be taken into consideration as your comments should be limited to those outlined above. Each written report is to be based on your individual findings, and no consensus report shall be accepted. If deemed

appropriate, comments considered may be incorporated into the status review report. As part of the status review process, the document will then become publicly available. Although names of the peer reviewers will not be directly associated to a specific review, they may be listed in the publication. Lastly, please do not distribute the status review report to others, as this document is considered confidential this time.

Again, we would like to thank you for taking the time to review this status review report, and we look forward to receiving your comments. If you have any questions about this review process or the status review report, please feel free to contact Mike Erwin at (978) 282-8479 or michael.erwin@noaa.gov or Kimberly Damon-Randall at (978) 282-8485 or Kimberly.damon-randall@noaa.gov.

Sincerely,

Mary A. Colligan
Assistant Regional Administrator for Protected
Resources