UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
NORTHEAST REGION
55 Great Republic Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930-2276

JAN - 9 2015

Mr. Robert Beal
Executive Director
Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
1050 N. Highland Street, Suite 200 A-N
Arlington, VA 22201

Dear Mr. Beal:

I appreciate the participation of individual members of the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (ASMFC) to peer review the Draft Biological Information and 4(b)(2) Impact Analysis for the Gulf of Maine, New York Bight, and Chesapeake Bay Distinct Population Segments (DPS) of Atlantic Sturgeon. We are requesting individual peer review by at least three members of the Sturgeon Technical Committee but welcome comments from any member. Comments should be submitted from individual reviewers and reviewers should not seek consensus. A single response that provides all of the comments is acceptable if each comment is attributed to the individual reviewer. All comments must be submitted to us by February 16, 2015. Comments can be submitted electronically (e.g., word document) to Lynn Lankshear at lynn.lankshear@noaa.gov.

Peer review of the Draft Biological Information, Economic Report, and 4(b)(2) Impact Analysis is an important step to prepare a proposed rule for designating critical habitat as required under section 4 of the Endangered Species Act. There are specific requirements for completion of peer review including that peer reviewers must have the requisite expertise, experience and skills. We are, therefore, requesting the expertise of individual Sturgeon Technical Committee members to peer review the biological information provided for each DPS (section 3), our application of this information to identify potential critical habitat for the Gulf of Maine, New York Bight, and Chesapeake Bay DPSs of Atlantic sturgeon (section 4), and the 4(b)(2) Impacts Analysis (section 5). Peer reviewers should focus their comments on the following topics:

1. The accuracy, quality, completeness, and relevance of the scientific information and data considered; particularly whether any additional data exist that were not considered.

2. Whether scientific uncertainties are reasonably identified and characterized.

3. Whether the document provides a well-reasoned rationale for the proposed critical habitat for each DPS based on the best available data.

4. If a reviewer believes that justification is lacking or specific information was applied incorrectly in reaching conclusions then he or she should provide specific comments.

The discretionary exclusion analysis does not require peer review, and as such, we have excluded it from the draft document provided for peer review. We are including the economic report since it is the source document for information provided in the 4(b)(2) impacts analysis. However, Sturgeon Technical Committee members should not peer review the economic report. We will be seeking separate peer review of the economic report by individual economics experts.

Other Requirements

Peer review is subject to additional requirements regarding public disclosure, conflict of interest, and restrictions on pre-dissemination of confidential information. To ensure that we have a transparent process for public disclosure, peer reviewer comments as well as the names and affiliations of each peer reviewer is posted online. We cannot guarantee anonymity of peer reviewers or comments if we receive a FOIA request. However, we can organize and post comments by reviewer number rather than by reviewer name (e.g., see the Peer Review Report on the Draft Biological Report on the Designation of Marine Critical Habitat for the Loggerhead Sea Turtle at http://www.cio.noaa.gov/services_programs/prplans/pdfs/ID196_%20Peer_Review_Report.pdf).

The Peer Review Bulletin further requires that non-Federal peer reviewers complete a "Confidential Conflict of Interest Disclosure" form (enclosed) and return it as well as a CV with his or her review. Peer reviewers who are federal employees do not need to sign the conflict of interest form; rather they must comply with applicable federal ethics requirements such as those at www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/waisidx_07/5cfr2635_07.html. Further information on the NOAA Conflict of Interest Policy and related Disclosure Forms can be found at http://www.cio.noaa.gov/Policy_Programs/info_quality.html. Finally, please note that the draft biological report is pre-decisional. It is, therefore, important that all reviewers keep this document confidential. Finally, for further information on the NOAA Information Quality Guidelines see http://www.cio.noaa.gov/Policy_Programs/IQ_Guidelines_110606.html.

If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Lynn Lankshear of my staff at (978) 282-8473 or by email at lynn.lankshear@noaa.gov.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Damon-Randall
Assistant Regional Administrator for
Protected Resources

Enclosures

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
NORTHEAST REGION
55 Great Republic Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930-2276

JAN - 9 2015

Dr. Jorge Holzer
Maryland DNR
580 Taylor Ave.
Annapolis, MD 21401-2334

Dear Dr. Holzer:

Thank you for agreeing to participate as a peer reviewer of the Draft Economic Impact Analysis of Critical Habitat Designation for the Gulf of Maine, New York Bight, and Chesapeake Bay Distinct Population Segments of Atlantic Sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrinchus oxyrinchus*). We appreciate your help with this important effort which will be used to prepare a proposed rule for designating critical habitat under section 4 of the Endangered Species Act. The NOAA Information Quality Guidelines provide further information and is available at http://www.cio.noaa.gov/Policy_Programs/IQ_Guidelines_110606.html.

We request that you review the data considered in the enclosed draft economic report and provide comments on the following topics:

1. The accuracy, quality, and completeness of the data considered, particularly if any additional data exist that were not considered.

2. Whether uncertainties in the data are reasonably identified and characterized.

3. Please provide specific comments if you believe that justification is lacking or specific information was applied incorrectly in reaching conclusions.

All comments must be submitted to us by February 16, 2015. Comments can be submitted electronically (e.g., word document) to Lynn Lankshear of my staff at lynn.lankshear@noaa.gov.

Other Requirements
Peer review is subject to additional requirements regarding public disclosure, conflict of interest, and restrictions on pre-dissemination of confidential information. To ensure that we have a transparent process for public disclosure, peer reviewer comments as well as the names and affiliations of each peer reviewer is posted online. We cannot guarantee anonymity of peer reviewers or comments if we receive a FOIA request. However, we can organize and post comments by reviewer number rather than by reviewer name (e.g., see the Peer Review Report on the Draft Biological Report on the Designation of Marine Critical Habitat for the Loggerhead Sea Turtle at http://www.cio.noaa.gov/services_programs/prplans/pdfs/ID196_%20Peer_Review_Report.pdf).

The Peer Review Bulletin further requires that non-Federal peer reviewers complete a "Confidential Conflict of Interest Disclosure" form (enclosed) and return it as well as a CV with his or her review. Peer reviewers who are federal employees do not need to sign the conflict of interest form; rather they must comply with applicable federal ethics requirements such as those at www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/waisidx_07/5cfr2635_07.html. Further information on the NOAA Conflict of Interest Policy and related Disclosure Forms can be found at http://www.cio.noaa.gov/Policy_Programs/info_quality.html. Finally, please note that the draft economic report is pre-decisional. It is, therefore, important that you keep this document confidential.

If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Lynn Lankshear of my staff at (978) 282-8473or by email at lynn.lankshear@noaa.gov.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Damon-Randall
Assistant Regional Administrator for Protected Resources

Enclosures

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
NORTHEAST REGION
55 Great Republic Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930-2276

JAN - 9 2015

Dr. Sabrina Lovell
Office of Science and Technology
National Marine Fisheries Service, NOAA
1315 East West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Dr. Lovell:

Thank you for agreeing to participate as a peer reviewer of the Draft Economic Impact Analysis of Critical Habitat Designation for the Gulf of Maine, New York Bight, and Chesapeake Bay Distinct Population Segments of Atlantic Sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrinchus oxyrinchus*). We appreciate your help with this important effort which will be used to prepare a proposed rule for designating critical habitat under section 4 of the Endangered Species Act. The NOAA Information Quality Guidelines provide further information and is available at http://www.cio.noaa.gov/Policy_Programs/IQ_Guidelines_110606.html.

We request that you review the data considered in the enclosed draft economic report and provide comments on the following topics:

1. The accuracy, quality, and completeness of the data considered, particularly if any additional data exist that were not considered.

2. Whether uncertainties in the data are reasonably identified and characterized.

3. Please provide specific comments if you believe that justification is lacking or specific information was applied incorrectly in reaching conclusions.

All comments must be submitted to us by February 16, 2015. Comments can be submitted electronically (e.g., word document) to Lynn Lankshear of my staff at lynn.lankshear@noaa.gov.

Other Requirements
Peer review is subject to additional requirements regarding public disclosure, conflict of interest, and restrictions on pre-dissemination of confidential information. To ensure that we have a transparent process for public disclosure, peer reviewer comments as well as the names and affiliations of each peer reviewer is posted online. We cannot guarantee anonymity of peer reviewers or comments if we receive a FOIA request. However, we can organize and post comments by reviewer number rather than by reviewer name (e.g., see the Peer Review Report on the Draft Biological Report on the Designation of Marine Critical Habitat for the Loggerhead Sea Turtle at http://www.cio.noaa.gov/services_programs/prplans/pdfs/ID196_%20Peer_Review_Report.pdf).

The Peer Review Bulletin further requires that non-Federal peer reviewers complete a "Confidential Conflict of Interest Disclosure" form and return it as well as a CV with his or her review. Peer reviewers who are federal employees do not need to sign the conflict of interest form; rather they must comply with applicable federal ethics requirements such as those at www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/waisidx_07/5cfr2635_07.html. Further information on the NOAA Conflict of Interest Policy and related Disclosure Forms can be found at http://www.cio.noaa.gov/Policy_Programs/info_quality.html. Finally, please note that the draft economic report is pre-decisional. It is, therefore, important that you keep this document confidential.

If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Lynn Lankshear of my staff at (978) 282-8473or by email at lynn.lankshear@noaa.gov.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Damon-Randall
Assistant Regional Administrator for Protected Resources

Enclosures

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
NORTHEAST REGION
55 Great Republic Drive
Gloucester, MA 01930-2276

JAN - 9 2015

Dr. Leslie Richardson
Policy Analysis & Science Assistance Branch
Fort Collins Science Center, USGS
2150 Centre Avenue, Bldg. C
Fort Collins, CO 80526

Dear Dr. Richardson:

Thank you for agreeing to participate as a peer reviewer of the Draft Economic Impact Analysis of Critical Habitat Designation for the Gulf of Maine, New York Bight, and Chesapeake Bay Distinct Population Segments of Atlantic Sturgeon (*Acipenser oxyrinchus oxyrinchus*). We appreciate your help with this important effort which will be used to prepare a proposed rule for designating critical habitat under section 4 of the Endangered Species Act. The NOAA Information Quality Guidelines provide further information and is available at http://www.cio.noaa.gov/Policy_Programs/IQ_Guidelines_110606.html.

We request that you review the data considered in the enclosed draft economic report and provide comments on the following topics:

1. The accuracy, quality, and completeness of the data considered, particularly if any additional data exist that were not considered.

2. Whether uncertainties in the data are reasonably identified and characterized.

3. Please provide specific comments if you believe that justification is lacking or specific information was applied incorrectly in reaching conclusions.

All comments must be submitted to us by February 28, 2015. Comments can be submitted electronically (e.g., word document) to Lynn Lankshear of my staff at lynn.lankshear@noaa.gov.

Other Requirements
Peer review is subject to additional requirements regarding public disclosure, conflict of interest, and restrictions on pre-dissemination of confidential information. To ensure that we have a transparent process for public disclosure, peer reviewer comments as well as the names and affiliations of each peer reviewer is posted online. We cannot guarantee anonymity of peer reviewers or comments if we receive a FOIA request. However, we can organize and post comments by reviewer number rather than by reviewer name (e.g., see the Peer Review Report on the Draft Biological Report on the Designation of Marine Critical Habitat for the Loggerhead Sea Turtle at http://www.cio.noaa.gov/services_programs/prplans/pdfs/ID196_%20Peer_Review_Report.pdf).

The Peer Review Bulletin further requires that non-Federal peer reviewers complete a "Confidential Conflict of Interest Disclosure" form and return it as well as a CV with his or her review. Peer reviewers who are federal employees do not need to sign the conflict of interest form; rather they must comply with applicable federal ethics requirements such as those at www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/waisidx_07/5cfr2635_07.html. Further information on the NOAA Conflict of Interest Policy and related Disclosure Forms can be found at http://www.cio.noaa.gov/Policy_Programs/info_quality.html. Finally, please note that the draft economic report is pre-decisional. It is, therefore, important that you keep this document confidential.

If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Lynn Lankshear of my staff at (978) 282-8473or by email at lynn.lankshear@noaa.gov.

Sincerely,

Kimberly Damon-Randall
Assistant Regional Administrator for Protected Resources

Enclosures