

[INSERT ADDRESS]

Dear [INSERT NAME]:

Thank you for agreeing to participate as a peer reviewer for the draft Status Review and Extinction Risk Workshop Report on thorny skates (*Amblyraja radiata*). We appreciate your help with this important effort. As you may know, in response to a petition from Defenders of Wildlife and Animal Welfare Institute to list thorny skate, we issued a positive 90 day finding on October 26, 2015. The petition and 90-day finding are available online: <http://www.fisheries.noaa.gov/pr/species/fish/thorny-skate.html>. The status review report, inclusive of the extinction risk workshop report, will be used to prepare a determination on whether listing thorny skate under the Endangered Species Act is warranted. We are asking you to review the document to ensure that its content is factually supported and is based on the best available scientific and commercial data, and the associated statements are scientifically valid. Additionally, we welcome additional considerations on the status of thorny skates based on your expertise.

I have provided information on our peer review requirements as well as specific instructions below. The NOAA Information Quality Guidelines provide further information and is available at http://www.cio.noaa.gov/services_programs/IQ_Guidelines_103014.html.

Peer review is subject to 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 are posted online. We cannot guarantee anonymity of peer reviewers or comments if we receive a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request. However, we will organize and post comments by reviewer number rather than by reviewer name.

The Peer Review Bulletin further requires that non-Federal peer reviewers complete a “Confidential Conflict of Interest Disclosure” form. This form is attached and may be returned with your review or at any time prior to receiving your review. Please note that you are required to submit a resume with the signed form. Further information on the NOAA Conflict of Interest Policy and related Disclosure Forms can be found at www.cio.noaa.gov/Policy_Programs/info_quality.html. This form must be returned to us before we can provide the draft status review to you for review; please return the signed form and resume no later than July 8, 2016 (via e-mail to Tara.Trinko@noaa.gov or fax 978-281-9394).

Specific instructions for carrying out the peer review:

We request that you review the data considered in the draft status review 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. If you believe that information is missing, justification for a statement is lacking, or specific information was applied incorrectly in reaching conclusions, please be specific in your comments.

When we provide the status review report for your review, we will specify a due date for comments. 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 (1-4). 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. Lastly, please do not distribute the draft report to others.

We appreciate your time and effort in completing this review. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Tara Trinko Lake of my staff (978-282-8477 or Tara.Lake@noaa.gov).

Sincerely,

Kimberly Damon-Randall
Assistant Regional Administrator for
Protected Resources

Enclosure